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Ancient

ROME

**MILITARY POWER AND POLITICAL FLAIR
CREATED EUROPE'S FIRST SUPERPOWER**

Mad emperors ruined Rome

Paranoia, perversion and
lust for power destroyed
the empire from within

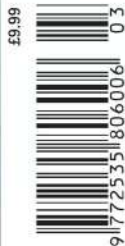
EMPIRE'S IRON FIST:

Legionnaires were merciless killing machines

BARBARIANS AT THE GATE:

Downfall

Germanic tribes plundered
the heart of the empire



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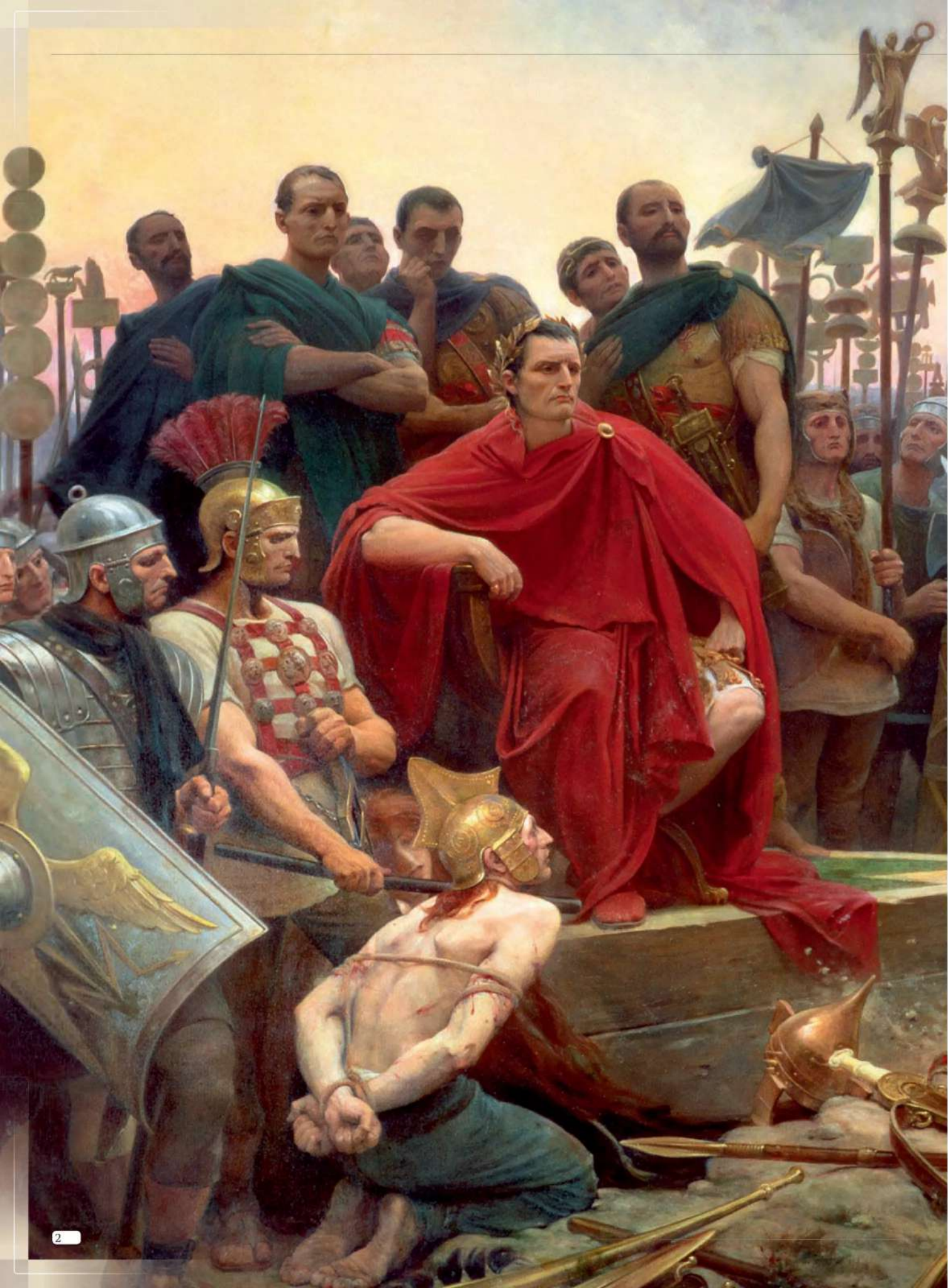
Millions of slaves
kept the empire going



BLOOD SPORT:

Gladiators fought
to death in the arena





ROME: ANTIQUITY'S SUPERPOWER

In 52 BC, after six years of war against the Gallic tribes, Julius Caesar had tamed another enemy of the Roman Republic. Almost one million Gauls were taken as slaves, while their land became just another Roman province. Soon tonnes of grain along with lucrative taxes were flowing towards the imperial capital, whose inhabitants enjoyed all the luxuries of the provinces.

Everything had changed since outlaws had founded Rome almost 500 years earlier. The small city on

the seven hills had grown powerful through irresistible military might and political ingenuity, and the Roman Republic came to rule an expanse of territory that stretched around the Mediterranean and beyond. A few years later, Julius Caesar was brutally assassinated and the republic was replaced by an empire that mad tyrants and power-hungry generals would ultimately destroy from within. In this special issue, discover the rich history behind antiquity's greatest power.

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Page 72 Where the Romans went, progress followed. The newest provinces on the edge of civilisation were quick to take advantage of Roman rule.



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ANCIENT ROME

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753 BC // Rome is founded



510 BC // The republic is established



146 BC // Carthage defeated



133 BC // Gracchus brothers introduce land reforms



107 BC // Marian military reforms

753-73 BC

BIRTH OF ROME

753 BC According to legend, Rome is founded in 753 BC by the twin brothers Romulus and Remus. Using techniques learned from the Etruscans, Italy's most advanced people, the early Romans build roads and advanced forms of irrigation. They also copy parts of the ancient Greeks' democratic traditions, creating the Senate, which comprises 300 senators – with 100 men being drawn from each of the region's three major clans. The Senate becomes the cornerstone of Rome's political system. The citizens also set up the *comitia centuriata*, a military assembly that secures troops for the growing legions.

REPUBLIC'S FIRST YEAR

510 BC Seven kings rule Rome before a mob overthrows the last one, the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus, along with monarchy as a whole. After several years of internal strife, in 451 BC, the Senate adopts the Law of the Twelve Tables, which codifies the Roman citizens' rights and duties and forms the foundation of Rome's legal system. The Romans spend the next hundred years at war with their neighbouring states, slowly increasing their territory. In 275 BC, the Romans capture the entire Italian peninsula, but the Phoenician superpower Carthage threatens from the south.



264 BC // First gladiator fight in Rome



216 BC // Hannibal crosses the Alps



73 BC // Spartacus's slave revolt



CARTHAGE IS CRUSHED

264 BC A dispute over the city of Messina in Sicily launches the Romans into a war with Carthage (the First Punic War). The fighting rages for 23 years until the Romans defeat the Carthaginian fleet in a decisive naval battle east of Sicily. Carthage is forced to pay large war reparations and has to hand over Sicily, which becomes Rome's first province in 241 BC. During the Second Punic War, Hannibal, the legendary Carthaginian general, crosses the Alps from Spain with his war elephants and defeats the Romans at Cannae in 216 BC. 62 years later, the Romans invade Carthage and lay waste to the city.

THE REPUBLIC EXPANDS

100 BC Rome expands exponentially in the final two centuries BC. The richest Romans gain ever more land, either by means of wealth or as spoils of war. The poor, on the other hand, remain landless. It creates a yawning gap between rich and poor, and discontent simmers in the republic. Before tensions can erupt into civil war, two noble brothers, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, enforce a series of far-reaching land reforms in the Senate that weaken Rome's richest citizens. Tiberius and Gaius pay with their lives in the bloody riots that follow, in which thousands are killed in the city streets.



58 BC // Caesar occupies Gaul



30 BC // Cleopatra commits suicide



AD 79 // Pompeii is destroyed



AD 80 // The Colosseum is inaugurated in Rome



AD 120 // Hadrian's Wall is

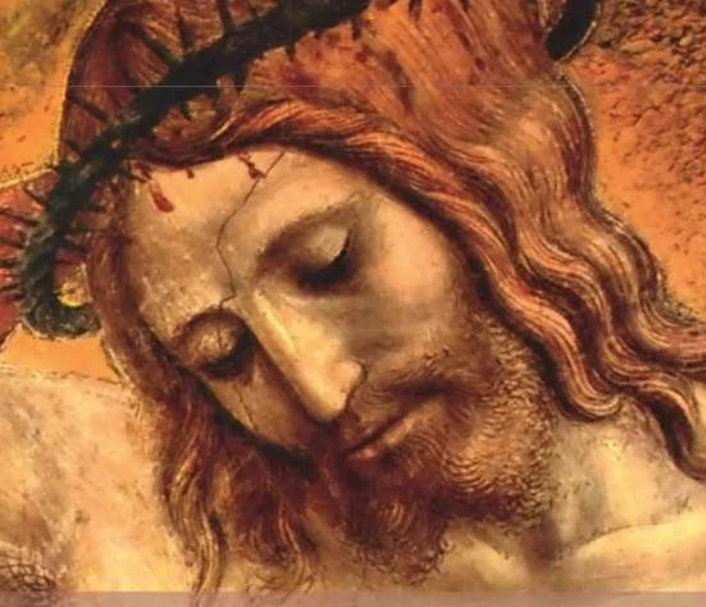
73 BC-250 AD

REPUBLIC IS COLLAPSING

58 BC For 400 years, Rome has been a republic, but in 60 BC, the three army commanders – Marcus Licinius Crassus, Gnaeus Pompey and Gaius Julius Caesar – form a triumvirate, a three-way political alliance that wields more power than the Senate. But when Crassus dies, Caesar and Pompey turn on each other in a bloody battle. In the end, the cunning Caesar wins and decides to appoint himself dictator for life. The Republic is dead, but the Senate still has power. In 44 BC, during a meeting of the Senate at the Curia of Pompey, Caesar is stabbed to death by his political rivals.

CIVIL WAR RAGES

27 BC After the assassination of Caesar, civil war breaks out. The battle is primarily between Caesar's heir, Gaius Octavian, and army commander Mark Antony, backed by the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra. In 30 BC, the two warlords meet in a giant naval battle near Actium, in present-day Greece. Octavian crushes Antony's fleet and secures power in Rome. In 27 BC, he becomes Rome's first emperor, taking the name Augustus. The republic is never restored, and for the next 400 years, Rome is ruled by a series of emperors, some more dictatorial and murderous than others.



c. AD 30 // Christ's crucifixion



AD 64 // Emperor Nero begins persecution of Christians



started



AD 161 // Marcus Aurelius rules



EMPIRE BEGINS TO GROW

AD 30 The Roman Empire continues to expand its borders during the first century AD. The Jewish territory of Judea comes under Roman control in AD 6, and Emperor Claudius invades Britannia in AD 43. In Judea, relations between the Jews and the Roman authorities are strained. Although conservative priests cooperate with the Romans, many Jews refuse to submit to the imperial rulers. At the same time, the Romans view the Jews' belief in one all-powerful god with suspicion. When Jesus is referred to as "King of the Jews", he is arrested, sentenced to death and crucified.

CHRISTIANITY ARRIVES

AD 64 Word of Christ spreads rapidly through the empire and the new religion soon becomes a threat to the emperors, whose divine power is granted by the many Roman gods. As a result, Rome's emperors take a hard line against the Christians. After a fire in Rome in AD 64, Emperor Nero initiates a pogrom against the city's Christians. For the next 12 days, they are hunted, tortured, burned alive like torches and executed in the arena. Despite such persecution, Christianity grows steadily over the next few centuries. By the fourth century AD, it has become powerful enough for emperors to embrace the faith.



AD 250 // Inflation and economic crisis



AD 273 // Emperor Aurelian unifies divided kingdom



AD 305 // Diocletian orders



395 AD // Eastern and Western Roman Empires



AD 410 // Visigoths sack Rome



AD 451 // Attila the Hun is defeated in Gaul

AD 250-476

BARBARIANS INVADE ROME

AD 235 In the third century AD, Germanic tribes threaten the Roman Empire from the north and Persian forces menace from the east. Rome's legions try to keep the barbarians from storming across the empire's borders – but in vain. The unending pillaging leaves the kingdom's economy in ruins, and its constantly changing emperors are weak. Between AD 235 and 284, Rome has no fewer than 20 emperors. Most die a violent death, slaughtered by rivals or captured and humiliated by the empire's enemies – not least the emperor Valerian, who dies in disgrace in Persian captivity.

EMPIRE IS REVIVED

AD 284 The army commander Diocletian ascends the imperial throne. He quickly proves to be one of Rome's most effective rulers. The army is reinforced, the border defences strengthened and a new tax system ensures there's sufficient revenue. After stabilising Rome, Diocletian tries to secure the future of the empire by splitting imperial power between four emperors, a system known as the tetrarchy. The hope is that by having four rulers, Rome won't be destroyed from within by incompetent tyrants. Unfortunately, the four emperors soon quarrel and civil war breaks out again.



four-way leadership



AD 305 // Constantinople is founded



AD 455 // Vandals plunder Rome



AD 476 // Western Roman Empire collapses

A SIGN FROM GOD

AD 313 According to legend, in 312 BC, before the Battle of Milvian

Bridge, the Emperor Constantine sees a cross in the sky together with the words "*In hoc signo vinces*" ("In this sign conquer"). He orders his men to add crosses to their shields and wins the battle. Grateful, the emperor issues the Edict of Milan, which for the first time demands that Christians within the Roman Empire are shown tolerance. Shortly afterwards, Constantine erects the first Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, on the same site as the modern Vatican City church. He then converts and is baptised on his deathbed in AD 337.

FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

AD 476 In AD 393, Emperor Theodosius divides the kingdom in two to form the Western and the Eastern Roman Empire (aka Byzantium). When Theodosius dies, the empire is actually larger than in Augustus's time, but pressure from outside is becoming too great. In AD 410, the Visigoths march on Rome and sack the city. Then, 29 years later, the vandal king Gaiseric captures Carthage, cutting off Rome's vital grain supplies. A short time after, Attila's Huns invade and the kingdom collapses. In AD 476, the thousand-year-old empire finally falls prey to the barbarian hordes.



BIRTH OF ROME

753-218 BC

In just 500 years, Rome grew from being an insignificant refuge for mercenaries and bandits to a city that ruled over the entire Italian peninsula. With a mixture of military might and diplomatic ingenuity, the growing empire subjugated the peninsula's many different peoples. At the same time, the Romans created a unique political system with a comprehensive set of written laws that exerted extensive power over both rich and poor.

753-218 BC

753 BC
Legendary
Romulus
founds
Rome.

509 BC
Romans oust
their last king
and establish
a republic.



494 BC Rome's underclass
rebels against the nobility and
gains more political influence.

295 BC
Rome wins a
decisive victory
over its enemies
at Sentinum.

218 BC
Romans
conquer
the Italian
peninsula.

The story of the Roman Empire begins on the banks of the river Tiber, which flows through one of the most fertile areas of the Italian peninsula. Somewhere near the Mediterranean coast, the river bends sharply, and there, more than 3,000 years ago, traders and fishermen were able to cross the river in small boats. When they landed on the southern bank, they could make out seven flat hills, which had been carved out by the river in the distant past.

The hills acted as natural defences for millennia, shielding the primitive lowland tribes from their enemies, but gradually the fertile area also became home to people from the Apennine Mountains to the east. The newcomers could melt bronze and fire pottery, and lived as nomads for part of the year. The area also attracted the Latins, a people from the Latium coastal plain to the south, and even travellers from the sea – probably from the Balkans – who brought with them iron-working skills.

In the fertile region between the mountains, Mediterranean and agricultural land, the Roman Empire emerged as a melting pot of people with different talents. At some point between 1000 and 700 BC, the first wooden house was erected, and the small nomadic settlements made way for a permanent village. We don't know the exact date when this happened, but it marked the moment the small farming community took its first

steps towards becoming one of the most awe-inspiring empires in world history.

MURDEROUS TWIN FOUNDED ROME

Today, more than 2,500 years later, historians are still struggling to separate the myths of early Rome from reality. The earliest written sources have been lost, and the accounts of Roman storytellers need to be taken with a good pinch of salt.

According to Roman legends, the empire's history began when a Vestal Virgin priestess from Latium gave birth to twin boys. She claimed that their father was Mars, the god of war, but Latium's King Amulius wasn't convinced. Believing she had broken her vow of celibacy, he killed the priestess and cast her sons into the Tiber.

The legend claims that the twins were taken by the current and drifted ashore at the foot of one of Rome's seven hills. Here, they were suckled by a female wolf and later raised by shepherds.

As adults, the brothers decided to found a city on the site where they had found salvation. But a quarrel about the exact location resulted in one twin,

Romulus, killing his brother, Remus. With the dispute permanently settled, Romulus established himself on Palatine Hill as Rome's first king in 753 BC.

It's unlikely that Romulus ever existed, and historians are still uncertain exactly who the first Romans really were. But there are many indications that the seven hills were populated by a mixture of escaped



Rome's mythical founders, the twins Romulus and Remus, were saved as infants by a she-wolf.



Cabin-shaped tombs, like this one from c. 800 BC, show what Rome's first buildings probably looked like. This was found 20 kilometres from Rome.

slaves, former mercenaries, robbers and bandits – a collection that even the Romans alluded to in their legends.

ETRUSCANS RULED ROME

Although the origins of the Romans are uncertain, it's clear that the ancient Etruscan civilisation played a crucial role in propelling the Roman Empire towards greatness. When Rome was founded, the Etruscans dominated central Italy. North of Rome, in the highlands of Etruria – in modern-day Tuscany – Etruscan kings ruled in flourishing city-states with names like Castra, Tarchna (now Cerveteri and Tarquinia) and, further south, Veii (since abandoned). The Etruscans were masterful urban planners and had learned advanced irrigation skills from the Mesopotamians.

Although the history of the Etruscans is still a mystery to academics, it's likely that the people had Middle Eastern ancestry, were skilled traders and were culturally inspired by the Greeks, the most advanced culture of the Mediterranean, by far. The Etruscans imported vases and other luxury goods from Greece, together with tin and lead, which they paid for with gold, among other things.

The small settlements on the seven hills were unlikely to have been one cohesive community until an Etruscan king seized power over the region and incorporated the hamlets into a single city-state. Rome's first king may well have been the Etruscan ruler Tarquin the Elder who, according to the Romans' own accounts, ruled the city between 616 and 579 BC – although Roman historians persisted in the belief that Romulus was the city's first king.

During the city's early monarchical phase, the Romans learned advanced urban management techniques from the Etruscans. They drained the swampy land between the city's hills and created a natural meeting place, where the Romans would establish the Forum and gather for the next thousand years to trade, pray and discuss politics and law. The Etruscan-influenced kings were also responsible for >>>>

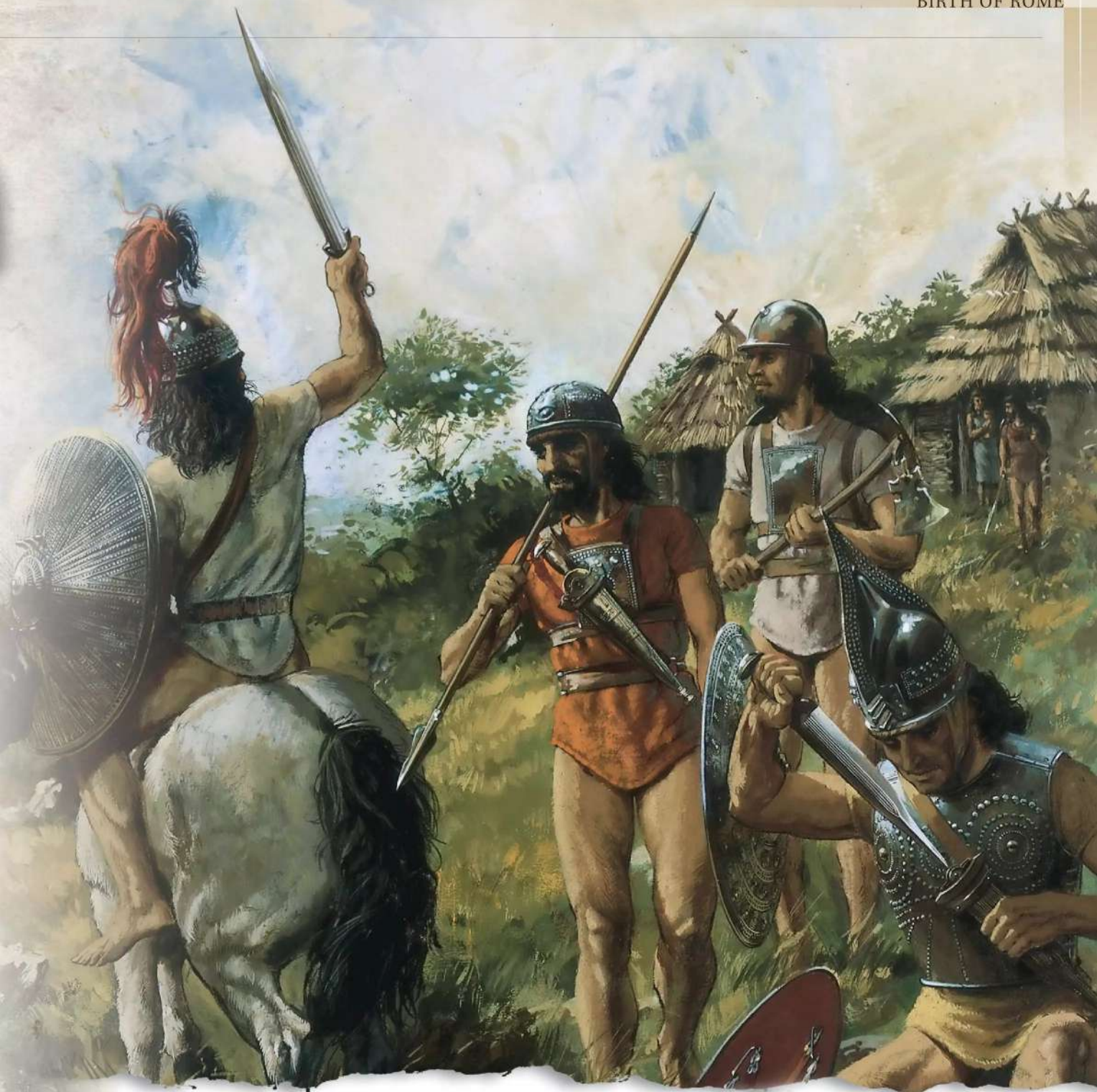
CARTHAGE'S NAVAL POWER WAS GROWING RAPIDLY

Carthage, in modern-day Tunisia, already controlled more than 300 cities around the Mediterranean when the Romans began to expand their territory. The Carthaginians ruled the sea – both militarily and as traders. Their commercial interests stretched as far as Britain and they controlled the flow of tin, which was important for making bronze, in the Mediterranean region. Rome and Carthage fought for centuries before the Romans sacked their rivals' city in 146 BC.



MEANWHILE IN CARTHAGE

The first permanent Roman settlement was built on one of Rome's seven hills between 1000 and 700 BC. The Romans dated the event to 753 BC.



“The seven hills were populated by a mixture of escaped slaves, former mercenaries, robbers and bandits”

“The king was replaced by two consuls”

>>>> the construction of Rome's first paved roads. They also had the city's citizens drag stone upon stone up the steep Capitol Hill, where they built a royal castle and Rome's first temple, which was dedicated to Jupiter. The formation of a grand city had begun.

KING UPGRADES THE ARMY

At the same time, Rome's political system slowly began to take shape. The citizens of the city were divided into three clans, each of which was represented by 100 men in an assembly intended to advise the king. The assembly, which was named the Senate, would form the backbone of Rome's political system for centuries to come. The Senate controlled the treasury and was behind most political decisions in the kingdom's first centuries.

Another cornerstone of the Roman political system was the People's Assembly. The first meetings of the assembly were probably organised to discuss military matters by the army's commander and king Servius Tullius, who ruled in the sixth century BC. Tullius wanted to expand the city's military force to 6,000 men. The army at that time consisted mainly of farmers – from poor

peasants to noble lords – who often had to protect the city with spears and shields in wars against other city-states. They were responsible for their own equipment, and to ensure they showed up when Rome called, Tullius set up a military assembly, the

Comitia Centuriata (Centuriate Assembly). Here, soldiers met and voted on military matters before going to war. As the oldest and wealthiest members contributed the most military equipment, their voices weighed most heavily. In this way, Tullius ensured that the nobility still held sway, but Rome's peasants were far more willing to go to war because they had been consulted, which made the *Comitia Centuriata* key to the Roman war machine's success.

The next king, Tarquin the Proud, was Rome's last. In perhaps the most decisive event in Rome's early history, the city's citizens revolted and expelled their tyrannical king in 509 BC.

REPUBLIC IS BORN

Out of the ashes of the monarchy grew a new form of government: the Roman Republic. The king was replaced by two consuls, each of whom was elected for one year at a time from among the members of

the Senate. The consuls were given the power to declare war and lead military campaigns. They could act decisively because the Senate did not have the power to block their decisions, but each consul could veto his counterpart's decrees – a measure that ensured no single consul could become a dictator.

The city's most powerful clans all supplied senators, and their power was secured through a system of patronage known as *clientela*, which linked a *cliens* (client), often from the lower classes, to a *patronus* (patron), a powerful benefactor from the upper class. Patrons were obliged to help their clients with loans, work and legal protection. Patrons held an audience every morning – the *salutatio* – where clients could make requests. In return, the clients had to follow the wishes of their patrons, including advancing their political ambitions. The *clientela* system allowed senators to largely decide who would become officials and thus worthy of life-long membership of the senate.

Clients from the middle classes of society could also act as patrons for clients from lower classes of society, and in this way the *clientela* system connected the whole of society, from top to bottom, in mutual dependence. Client bonds were inherited, which made the system extremely stable and helped to ensure a strong unity across class boundaries.

THE LOWER CLASS REVOLTS

Nevertheless, tensions slowly increased between the noble patricians and the common



Early coins were stamped bronze bars called *aes signatum*.

ROMANS CONQUERED THE ITALIAN PENINSULA OVER 400 YEARS

■ Rome started to expand around the year 600 BC, when the Italian peninsula was still a patchwork of different peoples. To subjugate all of Italy, the Romans had to defeat everyone, from nomadic and pastoral clans to highly advanced city-states. But through skilful diplomacy and innumerable wars, the Romans succeeded in subduing all the many tribes of Italy, one by one. Their rivals included the Latins, Etruscans, Sabines, Samnites, Gauls and Umbrians.

ROME'S EXPANSION

- 500-338 BC
- 298-290 BC
- 272 BC
- 264 BC
- 218 BC



plebeians. By the fifth century BC, the city's nobility was made up of around 50 patrician families, and as Rome's wealth grew, dissatisfaction increased among the more successful plebeians, who could not be elected as senators or consuls, yet still had to wear military uniform and defend Rome in times of war.

At the same time, military service reduced the agricultural yield, and plebeians – especially the poorest ones – were sometimes forced to borrow from exorbitant money lenders to help make ends meet. Dissatisfaction grew even stronger when the plebeians heard Greek settlers talk about Athenian democracy, where all free men could vote for their rulers. The plebeians decided to organise their own assembly – the *concilium plebis* – to coordinate their struggle for improved conditions. In 494 BC, they revolted – not through force of arms, but by withdrawing their labour in a general strike. The protest proved effective; the plebeians now had a body that could protect

them from everything from unfair treatment by creditors to summary executions without a trial.

WOMEN TOO FRIVOLOUS TO BE FREE

In 451 BC – 43 years later – the plebeians forced the Senate to pass the Law of the Twelve Tables. Romans could now visit the Forum and read detailed legal rules, listed on 12 tablets, that governed the city-state.

“Women,” it said on one of the bronze tablets, “even though they are of full age, because of their levity of mind shall be under guardianship.” Another rule assured disgruntled sons that if they had been sold three times as a slave by their father, they could consider themselves exempt from all future obligations to their patriarch. The tablets also told expectant parents that “a notably deformed child shall be killed immediately”, just as musicians were warned that songs that disgraced

another would be punished by death. But the tablets also contained provisions that greatly benefitted the general rule of law: judges who accepted bribes would be executed, and it was forbidden to pass laws that applied to only one person. Also, the patron-client relationship was clearly delineated, and patrons who deceived their clients could be sentenced to death.

For the next many years, the plebeians gradually gained improved terms and greater influence, while the hammer of debt became less severe. By 367 BC, the plebeians could be elected as consuls,



Roman legends state that the city's inhabitants rebelled and drove Rome's final king, the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus – also known as Tarquin the Proud – out of the city. Tarquinius returned with an Etruscan army and tried to reconquer the city, but at the Pons Sublicius, the

only bridge over the Tiber, the Etruscan army met the heroic Roman officer Horatius Cocles. He held back the Etruscans at the narrow end of the bridge, while his fellow soldiers destroyed the crossing behind him. The bridge fell into the river, Horatius swam to safety, and Rome was saved.

and in around 287 BC, the *concilium plebis* was given the right to pass its own laws.

ARCH-ENEMY WAS DEFEATED

The powerful patricians' many concessions to the plebeians helped to draw Rome's citizens together and give them a shared identity as Romans. The unity was vital, because the city had been embroiled in violent unrest and constant wars since the birth of the republic. At the beginning of the fifth century BC, the Latins in the city of Lavinium, 25 kilometres from Rome, declared themselves independent and entered into a military alliance with a number of nearby Latin coastal cities. Roman infantry marched against the upstarts and defeated them in around 496 BC – but the military victory faded next to the diplomatic success that followed.

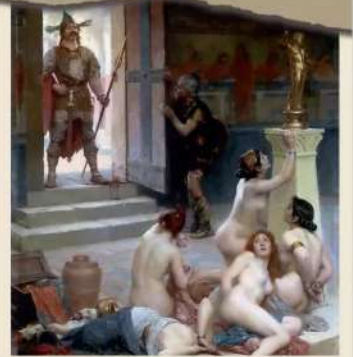
The Romans were already well versed in diplomacy and took a cunning approach when it came to conquests, which is one of the reasons that the Roman Empire was able to expand so far in later centuries. Following their military victory over the Latins, the Romans used their usual diplomatic tactics. First, they adopted two of the Latin gods, Castor and Pollux. Second, they caused the cohesive Latin

GAULS RAZED ROME'S ARCHIVES

Although the Romans eventually subjugated all of Italy, they lost some battles along the way. On 18th July 390 BC, Rome's large but rudimentary army met 12,000 Gaelic warriors led by Chief Brennus (right) on the Allia River, north of Rome. The Gauls won the battle

and entered Rome. Some of the population fled to Capitol Hill, while the Gauls sacked then set fire to the rest of the city. The flames consumed all Roman documents written to that date – a dreadful loss for posterity's attempts to understand the first Romans.

KEY MOMENTS



alliance to fall apart by negotiating peace with the cities one by one, so that one after the other, they were swallowed up by Rome.

After testing their legions against small neighbouring towns, in 444 BC, the Romans tried their luck against the mighty Etruscan town of Veii. The city was less than 20 kilometres further up the Tiber and was the richest of all the Etruscan cities. Here there were large temples with beautiful statues, magnificent mosaic-decorated tombs carved from the rock, and towering above the city, a mighty citadel.

Ultimately, only one city could control trade on the Tiber, and the Romans began a siege of Veii that lasted for several years, and only ended when a group of Romans, led by the patrician soldier Camillus, dug under the walls and infiltrated the city through the sewers.

MILITARY MIGHT AND DIPLOMACY

Over the next decades, the Roman Empire grew battle by battle. Military success was the surest way to secure social prestige and rise through Rome's political elite. As a result, any wealthy Roman with political ambitions eagerly spearheaded aggressive campaigns that could bring power and wealth to Rome, and personal honour to himself.

After each victory, the Romans offered their defeated enemies an outstretched hand. City-states were offered treaties that gave them the right to extensive self-determination as long as they cooperated with Rome – for example, paying taxes and delivering soldiers to the Roman army.

Before Rome could conquer the entire Italian peninsula, its army had to defeat the area's most populous tribe, the Samnites. They were livestock farmers and sometime raiders, who worshiped animal gods, and distinguished themselves from other Italian peoples by having neither rulers nor slaves.

The Romans and Samnites fought bitterly for years in the Apennine Mountains, and the legionaries occasionally suffered humiliating defeats. The battles against the Samnites prompted

Roman military commanders to use a new weapon: roads. From 312 BC onwards, the Appian Way – a more than 200-kilometre-long paved road through the lowlands – ensured troops and supplies could flow easily to the front. In 304 BC, the Samnites had to bow to the area's new great power.

However, the peace only lasted six years before fighting broke out again. In a last desperate campaign, the Samnites joined forces with Italy's Gauls, Umbrians and Etruscans in the hope that their combined military strength could free their people by defeating the increasingly advanced Roman war machine.

The most important battle in the decisive war for the Italian peninsula took place at Sentinum in 295 BC. The Romans sent as many as 40,000 men to the battlefield, including an elite cavalry force containing a thousand horsemen. For two long days, the two armies stared at each other across the field. Then the Roman legions attacked. The Gauls' chariots punctured the lines of the Roman infantry, but the Romans held their ground. When the battle was over, 35,000 of the enemy's 50,000 soldiers lay dead. Five years later, the Samnites surrendered their cause.

Now all of Italy lay before the sandals of the Romans, and within a few decades, all resistance had been cleared away. In 218 BC, the Roman Empire stretched over the entire peninsula, from north to south. Just five or six hundred years after the first permanent settlements sprang up on one of Rome's seven hills, the warrior peoples of central Italy had subjugated the peninsula with swords, unity and cunning. ■

5,000

armed men made up a Roman legion in the fourth century BC.

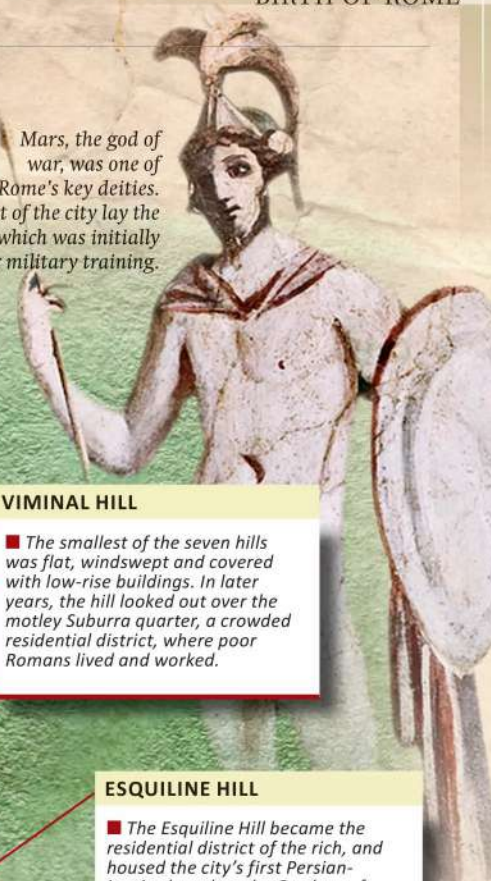
Samnite warriors inflicted heavy defeats on the Romans before the republic's army defeated them in the third century BC.

ROME WAS BUILT ON SEVEN HILLS



Rome was founded between the Apennine Mountains, the Tiber and the fertile farmland of central Italy. Seven hills gave the early Romans protection from their enemies in times of war. Afterwards, they became the setting for a city of millions, with the Roman Forum as its beating heart.

Mars, the god of war, was one of Rome's key deities. West of the city lay the Field of Mars, which was initially used for military training.



QUIRINAL HILL

Originally home to a village inhabited by the Romans' neighbours, the Sabines. Later, the hill held several temples and the last bath house built by the Romans.

VIMINAL HILL

The smallest of the seven hills was flat, windswept and covered with low-rise buildings. In later years, the hill looked out over the motley Suburra quarter, a crowded residential district, where poor Romans lived and worked.

FIELD OF MARS

CAPITOL HILL

This hill was home to the Palace of the Etruscan Kings and one of Rome's key temples, the Capitol, dedicated to the gods Jupiter, Juno and Minerva.



ROME

FORUM

The earliest Romans used the swamp in the middle of Rome as a burial site, but in the seventh century BC, the area was drained to create a natural centre for the city's religious, political, social, commercial and legal life over the next thousand years.

ESQUILINE HILL

The Esquiline Hill became the residential district of the rich, and housed the city's first Persian-inspired garden, the Gardens of Maecenas, which included terraces, libraries and possibly Rome's first heated swimming pool.



PALATINE HILL

Rome's central hill and, according to legend, the home of the city's first fortification. Archaeologists have found the remains of wooden and stone huts dating back to before 900 BC on this hill. Later, the hill housed Rome's elite, along with imperial palaces.



CAELIAN HILL

Here, the Claudius Temple nestled between elegant residences full of frescoes and with beautiful gardens. Even today, you can see the remains of one of Rome's most powerful aqueducts, which ran through the area.

TIBER

AVENTINE HILL

The Aventine Hill, together with the Palatine Hill, housed Rome's first settlements. Later, the area south of the Circus Maximus racetrack became home to the city's newcomers and teemed with temples celebrating all sorts of religions.

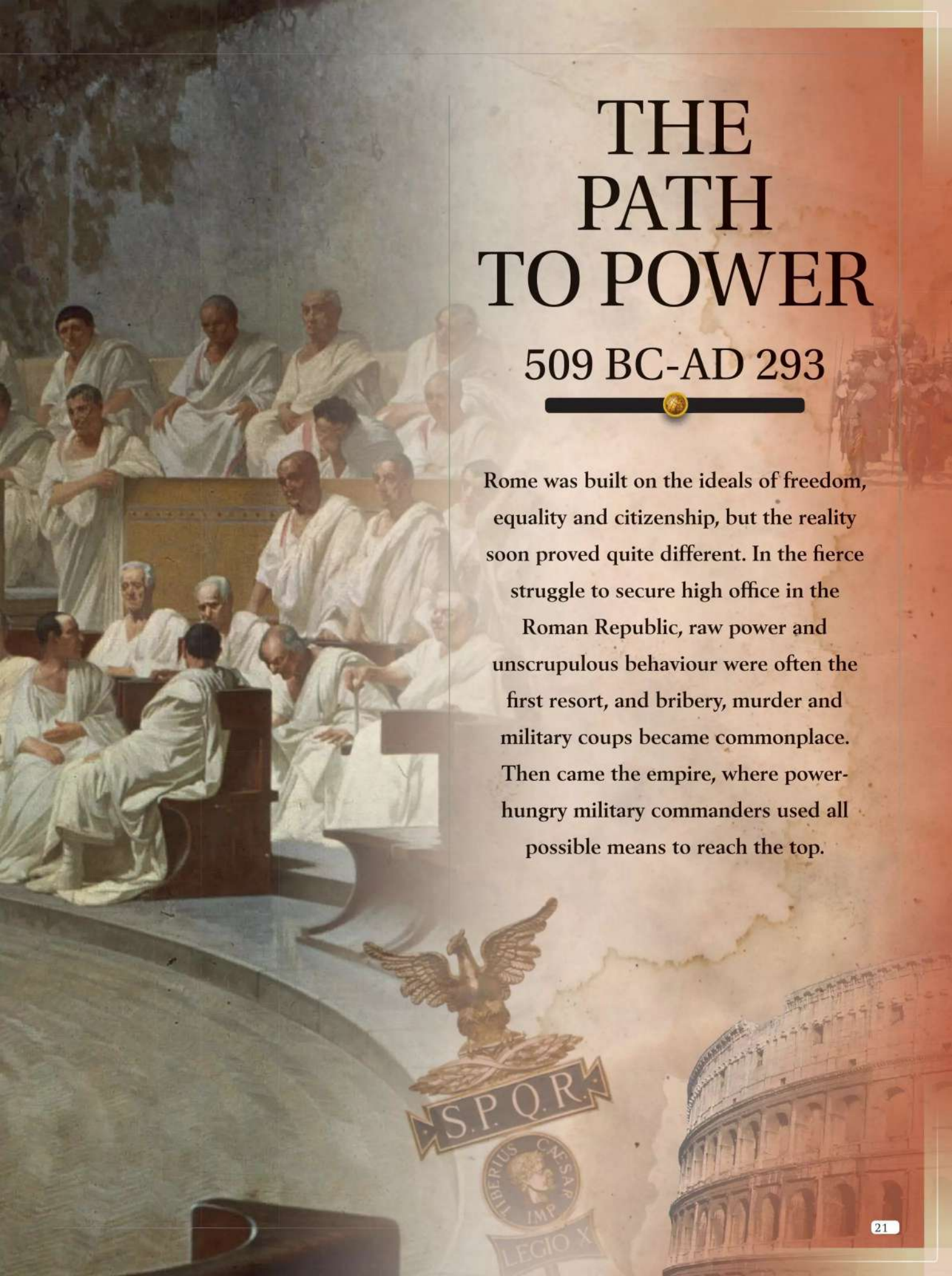


0 500 m

The millennial ruins of the Roman Forum still tower above the heart of the city.





The background of the page features a detailed illustration of Roman senators in white togas seated in a semi-circular forum. The scene is set against a backdrop of classical Roman architecture, including a large archway and a distant view of the Colosseum. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of orange, red, and brown.

THE PATH TO POWER

509 BC-AD 293

Rome was built on the ideals of freedom, equality and citizenship, but the reality soon proved quite different. In the fierce struggle to secure high office in the Roman Republic, raw power and unscrupulous behaviour were often the first resort, and bribery, murder and military coups became commonplace. Then came the empire, where power-hungry military commanders used all possible means to reach the top.



509 BC-AD 293

509 BC Roman Republic replaced the monarchy.

46 BC Success in war enables Julius Caesar to seize power in Rome as a dictator.

44 BC Caesar declares himself dictator for life – and is stabbed to death by his rivals.

27 BC Caesar's adopted son Augustus founds the empire.

AD 293 Diocletian introduces division of power that leads to the Roman Empire's split.



One night at the end of 62 BC, Julius Caesar crept out of his house. The man who would one day become the sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire, but who for now had the title of praetor, edged along the walls, sneaking unnoticed through the cool darkness and on to the road out of the city. When morning came, he was in the mountains – far from Rome and the creditors who were furiously demanding their money, and who had forbidden him to leave the city.

Caesar had not squandered his many borrowed sesterces on personal pleasures. Apart from his penchant for fine clothing, the then 38-year-old praetor lived modestly. But his political ambitions were expensive. Magnificent banquets, gladiatorial games, bribes, and generous handouts to family and friends had required huge sums, and now Caesar was broke. It was only after several military campaigns and some astute political manoeuvring – including marrying off his daughter Julia to form a powerful alliance – that Caesar was able to rid himself of his creditors and reach his ultimate goal: dictator of Rome.

POLITICS WAS AN UPPER-CLASS SPORT

Caesar was far from the only Roman statesman who fought his way to the top with intrigue and bribery. On the contrary. From the last year of the republic until the fall of the Roman Empire 500 years later, corruption, secret deals and even murder were among the common methods of reaching the top of world power in Rome. The reality was far from the ideals on which the republic had been

built. Formed in 509 BC, after Rome's seventh and final king had been expelled, the republic created a system in which the path to power was straightforward, at least on paper. In principle, all free Roman men were equal and had the same access to power. The path to the top involved navigating a career ladder – the *cursus honorum* (career of honour) – which, step by step, prepared candidates to become consuls, the republic's most powerful office.

In reality, however, a career in politics was reserved for the richest Romans. All offices were unpaid, and, therefore, only aristocrats had the time and money to take on political positions – not to mention fund an election campaign.

The election of the powerful officials took place at the assemblies, where all free, male Roman citizens could vote. In order to obtain sufficient votes among the citizens, a hopeful candidate had to gather a large number of *clientes* (clients) to support him. These clients, usually middle-class men, received services and money from their wealthy *patronus* (patron) in return for political support. Gathering a sufficiently large number of clients was therefore, by its very nature, a privilege reserved for the patrician class, noble patrons with enough money to support their clients.

The same was true of a seat in the Senate, Rome's most powerful political body, which controlled the state's treasury. This powerful assembly consisted exclusively of current and former quaestors, aediles, praetors and consuls, all of whom were appointed senators for life.

Election campaigns themselves cost a fortune. Under Roman law, a candidate had to give away a certain amount of money

Polling station: Voting took place in the *ovile* (sheep fold), a wooden enclosure in the Field of Mars that resembled a sheep pen.



Military success was a shortcut to power. For example, Vespasian became emperor because he defeated a Jewish uprising and razed Jerusalem.

during his campaign – monetary gifts that the Romans did not perceive as corruption, but simply as part of the political game. The same was true of gladiatorial games and other forms of entertainment for which rich politicians were expected to pay.

The aediles – the officials in charge of organising such entertainment – used the immensely popular gladiatorial games in their efforts to climb the political ladder. For example, during his time as an aedile, Julius Caesar impressed the crowds with a series of games in which 320 pairs of gladiators entered the arena in shiny silver armour – an unprecedented extravagance that helped push Caesar into debt, but also secured immense popularity with the mob.

CORRUPTION AND WAR GRIPPED

Contesting a Roman office was originally considered a great honour and, according to Roman ideals, was largely about duty. An official had to do something good for Rome and its citizens – manage finances wisely, improve the water and grain supply, maintain peace and order, and so on.

In the late years of the republic, however, the Roman democracy that was so straightforward on paper, became

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AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER AD 15-59

POWER-HUNGRY MOTHER OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

■ Agrippina was already the widow of a rich old man when she convinced her uncle, Emperor Claudius, to marry her in AD 49. The marriage was the preliminary move in a purposeful push for power, and as the empire's new first lady, Agrippina immediately set about ensuring her young son, Nero, would inherit the throne. In AD 54, she laced Claudius's food with poisonous mushrooms so that Nero could rule as

Agrippina's puppet. During his first five years in power, the young Nero allowed himself to be ruled by his mother, but gradually he became more headstrong – and insane. Agrippina tried to replace Nero with Claudius's son Britannicus, but the attempt cost the woman her life; once Nero learned of her treachery, he instigated five assassination attempts against his mother, the last of which succeeded.

Granddaughter of Emperor Augustus – Married as a 13-year-old – Mother of Emperor Nero

FIVE CAREER STEPS LED TO THE TOP IN THE REPUBLIC

To reach the top, a Roman had to follow the *cursus honorum* (the career of honour). Each step had to be taken after the previous one, so that politicians could gradually gather suitable experience. Most of the five offices shown here were filled by aristocrats, but in the late republic, ten tribune posts were added, which enabled non-aristocratic plebeians to veto the decisions of other officials. The system continued during the imperial period, but lost much of its significance.



Censors could remove senators from office.

CENSOR

Only for ex-consuls

■ The honourable position of censor was reserved for particularly upright former consuls, who were elected for 18 months at a time. The censors were responsible for holding censuses and assessing the citizens' wealth for tax purposes. They also decided who became senators. If a senator acted objectionably, the censors could fire him.



Lucius Junius Brutus is said to have been the first consul.

CONSUL

Age: 42+ years

■ The office of consul was a career high point. Two consuls, elected for one year at a time, shared power and served as the highest authority in both civilian and military matters. In war, they had supreme command of the army. Upon completion of service, a consul typically governed an important province as a proconsul.



The praetors functioned as judges.

PRAETOR

Age: 39+ years

■ The primary task of the six to eight praetors was to act as judges. When the consuls were out of town – on campaigns, for example – the praetors also performed consular duties. Upon completion of service, the Senate could appoint them as propraetors: heads of a Roman province.



Aediles arranged all Roman entertainment.

AEDILE

Age: 36+ years

■ The four aediles were responsible for holding gladiatorial games, races, plays and other public entertainment. Their other duties included maintaining peace and order, supplying grain and water, and overseeing the temples.



Quaestors had to prove capable of managing the state's treasury.

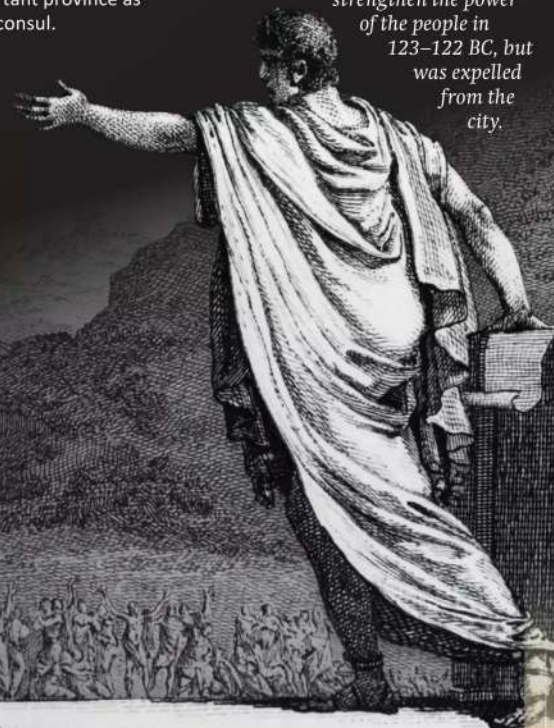
QUAESTOR

Age: 30+ years

■ Quaestors were responsible for the management of the state treasury, both in Rome and in the provinces. Originally there were only two, but that grew to 20 later on. During campaigns, a quaestor accompanied the consul to keep track of the military coffers.

Rome's political system was deeply conservative. Gaius Gracchus tried to strengthen the power of the people in

123–122 BC, but was expelled from the city.



“ Sulla’s enemies learned to fear his brutal purges ”



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Cicero's speeches earned him the post of consul, even though he was not an aristocrat.

increasingly corrupt and prone to abuses of power. With the blessing of their friends in the Senate, many officials stayed in their posts for longer than they were entitled and used their positions to embezzle enormous sums of money.

In the provinces, far from Rome, the possibilities for personal enrichment were almost endless. Gaius Verres (115-43 BC) was particularly unscrupulous. As Rome's governor of Sicily, Verres plundered the island's temple treasures and swindled grain farmers so badly that Sicily became much poorer during his reign – unlike most other provinces, which generally prospered under Roman rule.


Other ambitious politicians resorted to raw military force to get to the top. The general Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138-78 BC) wouldn't have come from a fine enough family to be able to climb all the way to the top of Roman society under normal circumstances, but he took advantage of a period marked by civil war and power struggles to seize the leadership through a military coup. Contrary to the law, which forbade soldiers to enter Rome itself, Sulla ordered his legions to occupy the city, and was subsequently appointed dictator – a special title that the Romans had introduced many years earlier for a temporary ruler who could be appointed to govern the state safely through a time of crisis.

As dictator, Sulla claimed to want to re-establish the republic in the wake of the civil wars. His methods were extremely harsh, and Sulla's enemies learned to fear his brutal purges. These came in the form of proscriptions, in which thousands of people were declared enemies of the state and outlawed, losing their property and sometimes their lives.

Sulla remained in office for three years, after which, surprisingly, he retired. He died shortly afterwards.

## LUST FOR POWER PROVED FATAL

Julius Caesar also used his military position to seize power. After his successful campaigns in Spain, North Africa, Asia Minor and Gaul, all of which greatly expanded the empire's territory, he defeated his political rivals in a bloody civil war and was proclaimed dictator for life. Despite the many victories, however, the proud general was unable to defeat the powerful Senate. Caesar's meteoric advance in Rome



was more than his political rivals could stomach. On 15th March 44 BC, he was overthrown by a group of conspirators, each of whom pulled a sharp dagger from within the folds of his white toga and helped stab Caesar to death.

## AUGUSTUS TRICKED THE SENATE

The year after the assassination of Caesar, an emergency government with three members – the Triumvirate – took power in Rome. The most prominent of the trio, Octavian, would later become known as Augustus, Rome's first emperor. As Caesar's adopted son and preferred heir, Octavian enjoyed a special status in Rome, but in principle, the Triumvirate was supposed to rule as equals.

However, the three-leaf clover was quickly ripped apart by internal strife. Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, the weakest of the three, was soon eliminated from the game, after which the last two, Octavian and Mark Antony, became fierce rivals. When Antony settled in Egypt to nurture his relationship with Queen Cleopatra, Caesar's former mistress, Octavian made his move.

Many Romans feared that Antony would ally with Cleopatra, occupy Rome and

“The transition to empire only made the power games in Rome more brutal and corrupt”





*Julius Caesar felt the brutality of Rome's political system when his enemies stabbed him to death during a meeting of the Senate.*

crown himself king. Octavian took full advantage of these fears. In February 32 BC, he marched into the senate building, accompanied by armed men, and read out a document that he claimed was Antony's will and which stated that Antony intended the children he fathered with Cleopatra to be his heirs and that he himself wished to be buried in Egypt. As Octavian had planned, the will fed rumours that Antony intended to make Alexandria, on the north coast of Egypt, the new capital of the republic.

Furious, the consuls gave Octavian the power to assemble a fleet and dispose of the treacherous Antony, once and for all. Accompanied by his able general Agrippa, Octavian's warships skilfully defeated Antony and Cleopatra's mighty fleet off the coast of Actium in Greece. The defeated lovers fled to Egypt, but committed suicide when Octavian pursued them there with his superior army.

#### EMPEROR KEPT A LOW PROFILE

Rich with loot from his campaign in Egypt, Octavian returned to Rome and distributed monetary gifts to the citizens of the city. The crisis – which Octavian had helped engineer – was over, but the senators had received such a fright that they allowed Octavian to remain commander-in-chief of

most of Rome's army – and thus he became the first real emperor.

Despite his new-found power, Octavian kept a low profile for fear of appearing too much like a king – a style of ruler the Romans detested. He also avoided proclaiming himself dictator, as Caesar had done. Instead, he skilfully manipulated different political offices, making it appear as though the republic was still functioning. In reality, though, Octavian's grip on power tightened. To emphasise his authority, he took the name Augustus – meaning sacred

or exalted – in 27 BC. Thus, he discreetly suggested that he, as Rome's new "first citizen", was directly connected to the gods.

The result of Augustus's slippery manoeuvring was that neither the duties nor the means of succession of the emperor were ever laid down. The transition to empire only made the power games in Rome more brutal and corrupt. Although there was plenty of abuse of power under the republic, the various offices did contain a real political aspect, and many Roman officials spent their time improving the lives of

>>>>>

#### TECHNOLOGY.....

#### CULTURE.....

#### ECONOMY.....

#### DAILY LIFE.....



### Bread bought votes

Access to cheap grain was vital for Rome's many impoverished citizens, who subsisted largely on bread. Bread prices were a key campaign issue during elections, with candidates promising lower prices through state subsidies or

even giving it away. Free grain was first proposed and adopted as a political policy around 58 BC. From then on, all emperors, after including Augustus, distributed free or very cheap grain to the city's poor to secure their support.



>>> Rome's inhabitants by building aqueducts, sewers, homes and open spaces.

Under the empire, however, the titles of quaestor, aedile, praetor and even consul became largely symbolic, since all real power was vested in the emperor, Rome's first citizen. At the same time, the value of the lower offices in building a career was diminished because the role of emperor was not included in the *cursus honorum*.

#### MILITARY POWER INCREASED

At the beginning of the imperial era, power was concentrated in the hands of a small elite – just as it had been in the republic – and the first emperors all came from Augustus's family.

In Rome, however, family was not confined to blood relatives. Adoption was a common means of securing a male line in aristocratic families without sons, and marriage was employed to cement political alliances.

Emperor Augustus's adopted granddaughter, Agrippina, was one of the most ruthless when it came to exploiting family ties to gain power. She poisoned her own uncle and husband, Emperor Claudius, so that her son from a previous marriage could take the throne. The son's name was Nero – one of Rome's most insane emperors, who put more energy into theatre, chariot racing and debauched orgies than into reigning.

Nero's time on the throne ended after several years of failing rule because both the Senate and branches of the military opposed him. Indeed, as the possessions of the Roman Empire grew, military backing became increasingly important to those wishing to become the first citizen of the Roman Empire. In fact, in time, several emperors were recruited directly from the legions themselves.

#### WAR HERO BECAME EMPEROR

Titus Flavius Vespasianus was a skilled soldier, but as the son of a tax collector, he would not normally have had the chance to

reach the top in a society so obsessed and divided by class, where the aristocratic patricians still wielded most of the power.

Circumstances, however, were anything but normal towards the end of Nero's reign. In the Roman province of Judea, a revolt threatened. Since its capture in 63 BC, the area had been a thorn in the Romans' side. The problems were self-inflicted to some extent, resulting from the Romans' refusal to accept the wishes of the locals and instead empowering client kings, such as the tyrant Herod. Dissatisfaction simmered, and in 67 AD, an uprising

broke out across Judea. The first soldiers sent from Rome were repulsed outside Jerusalem and even suffered the indescribable shame of losing their standard – the symbolic banner of division that served as a hallmark and rallying point for Roman legions. It was then that the

effective military commander, who would later become known as Vespasian, was sent in with three legions. Over the next year, he quashed the revolt.

His military successes secured Vespasian enormous popularity among his troops, and on 1st July 69, he was declared emperor and appointed commander of the Roman forces in Judea, Egypt and Syria. The powerful force made such a big impression that legions elsewhere, including in the Balkans, declared their unreserved support for Vespasian.

After a brief civil war against Emperor Vitellius, who refused to cede power, Vespasian's forces invaded Rome, and the war hero entered the city to the cheers of the people.

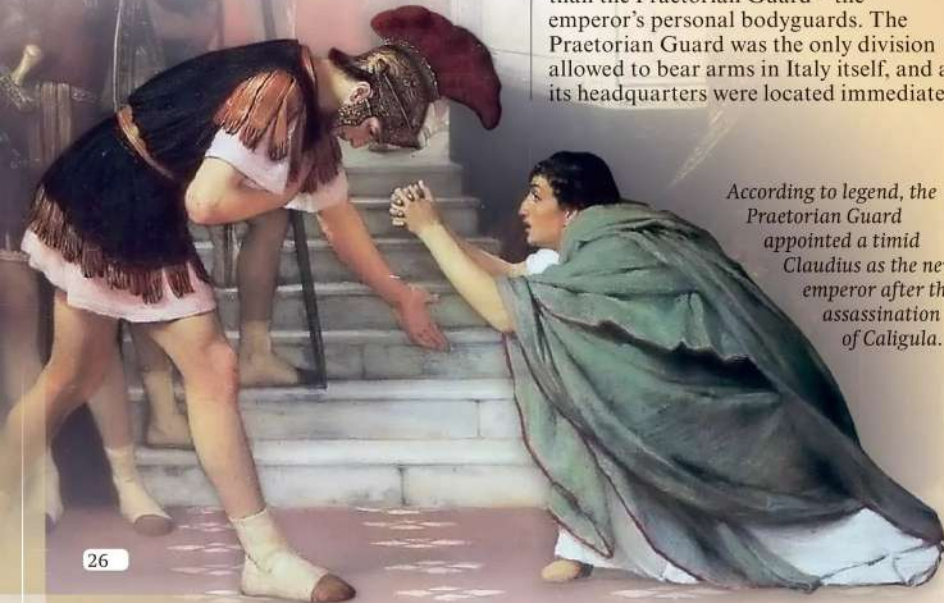
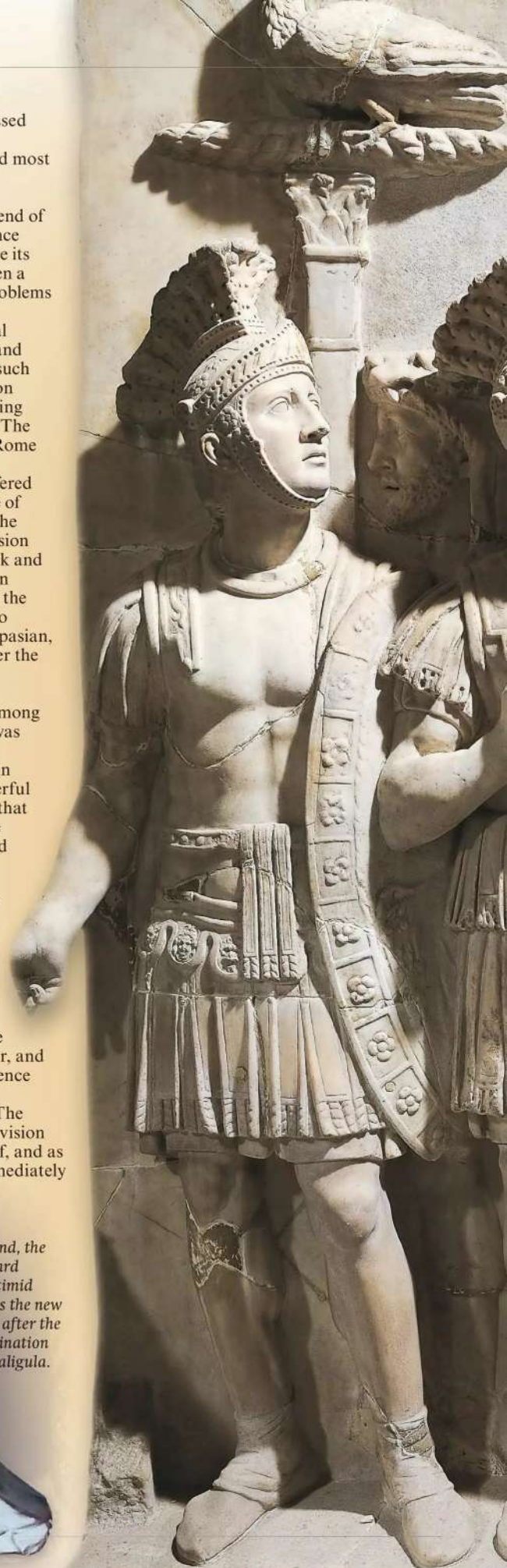
#### IMPERIAL TITLE WAS SOLD

In the late years of the empire, the military gained ever greater power, and no military unit had greater influence than the Praetorian Guard – the emperor's personal bodyguards. The Praetorian Guard was the only division allowed to bear arms in Italy itself, and as its headquarters were located immediately

23

dagger blows ended the life of the 55-year-old Julius Caesar in 44 BC.

According to legend, the Praetorian Guard appointed a timid Claudius as the new emperor after the assassination of Caligula.





The 9,000 men of the Praetorian Guard were paid three times as much as other legionnaires. This was to ensure their loyalty as the emperor's bodyguards.



outside Rome, its support was crucial for those hoping to take power.

In the late second century AD, the Praetorian Guard repeatedly intervened against unpopular emperors. First, they dispatched the tyrannical Commodus, who had angered Roman senators by delegating his imperial duties to prefects and chamberlains, while simultaneously adopting a more dictatorial leadership style. When his successor, the ageing General Pertinax, subsequently proved incompetent, the Praetorian Guard also assassinated him – although this time there was no successor standing in the wings.

In 193 AD, therefore, the Praetorian Guard's commander-in-chief announced that the next emperor would be whomever offered the guard the greatest sum of money. A crowd soon appeared at the barracks and Didius Julianus – one of the city's wealthiest senators – announced that he was willing to pay whatever was required. Such payments – known as *donativum* – from a future emperor to the Praetorian Guard and other soldiers was not uncommon, but the amount on this occasion – 7,250 *dinarii* – was much higher than usual. It was an offer the Praetorian Guard could not refuse, and Julianus was promptly declared emperor.

#### **SOLDIERS TOOK THE THRONE**

As Rome's enemies grew in strength, the military increasingly became a direct supplier of new emperors. From 235 to 284 AD, a host of generals proclaimed themselves emperors, and became embroiled in violent squabbles with their rivals. Historians refer to this period as the Crisis of the Third Century, or the Military Anarchy.

Emperor Diocletian, who came to power in 284 AD, realised that it was impossible to rule the vast Roman Empire in the midst of so many power struggles and changes of leadership. His solution, which was introduced in 293 AD, was the Tetrarchy: a power-sharing arrangement with four emperors, two seniors and two juniors, who would be trained to take over after ten years. The system lasted only 20 years, but began the later division of the Roman Empire into two domains – east and west – each with its own emperor at the helm.

Perhaps symbolic of the declining influence of the once powerful Roman senate, its members remained in Rome as a dethroned, impotent assembly of garrulous old men, while the emperors moved their bastions of power to Milan and Constantinople. The city on the Bosphorus eventually became the seat of the mighty Byzantine Empire, while the once mighty metropolis of Rome was overrun by barbarians. ■









# THE EMPIRE'S IRON FIST

550 BC-AD 235

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For 800 years the Roman legions ruled the battlefield. The city's early spear-wielding militia gradually evolved into the most fearsome killing machine in antiquity. With the most powerful weapons, the most advanced equipment, the most flexible organisation, and the most intimidating iron discipline, the legionaries defeated everyone they met from mighty Persian armies to hordes of howling Britons.





## 550 BC-AD 235

**c 550 BC**  
King Tullius  
expands  
Rome's  
army.

**264-146 BC**  
Rome battles  
Carthage  
during the  
Punic Wars.

**110-100 BC**  
General  
Gaius Marius  
reforms the  
Roman army.

**58-51 BC**  
Julius  
Caesar  
takes  
Gaul.



**27 BC**  
The army is  
put under the  
direct control  
of the emperor.

**235 AD**  
Army leaders  
fight to seize  
the imperial  
throne.

The two armies were separated by a desolate plain as 230,000 Celtic rebels lined up to attack 10,000 Roman soldiers. Ahead lay a crucial battle. The year was AD 60 and spring was turning into summer in what would one day become the English midlands.

The Roman Empire's rule in the province of Britannia was under threat from the Celtic queen Boudica, whose rebel forces had retaken most of the occupied territory on the island in less than two weeks. Now, she and her warriors faced a Roman army, whose backbone consisted of the famous Legio XIV, founded by Julius Caesar himself. The legion was close to full strength: 5,000 armed veterans with years of experience from their previous invasion of Britannia and many battles against strong Germanic tribes.

The legion's heavy infantry had formed up ready for battle in three lines. The legionnaires were dressed and equipped in the standard fashion: a blood red tunic, steel armour across their chest, back and upper arms, a helmet with neck protector, hobnailed military sandals, a gladius sword and a dagger in the belt. In their right hand they carried a spear, and by their side was a shield adorned with the lightning bolt of the god of war, Mars.

The soldiers of Legio XIV were flanked by 2,000 veterans of Legio XX, men with two decades of service behind them. Their shields bore the legion's wild boar emblem. On the other flank, 2,000 Frisii auxiliary

troops (from what is now the Netherlands) crowded together. Beyond them came the cavalry – 1,000 soldiers on horseback.

On the other side of the battlefield, the Celtic warrior queen rode back and forth, whipping up her troops. From the sidelines, thousands of Celtic women roared encouragement to their battle-ready men.

#### BRITONS ROARED AT SILENT ROMANS

The Romans were heavily outnumbered, but their general, Gaius Paulinus, rode calmly among the legionnaires with advice and encouragement.

**Punishment**  
for minor offenses  
sometimes saw  
soldiers forced to  
stand guard in  
beltless tunic  
that looked like  
a dress.

"It would be better for us to fall fighting bravely than to be captured and impaled," he said.

Queen Boudica cried out to her men: "In this battle you must conquer or die."

Then she waved her chariots forward. The Celtic warriors roared as the chariots rumbled

across the flat fields, their faces convulsed in hatred as they beat their spears against their shields.

Normally, the legionnaires would advance to meet the enemy, but the Roman army stood still that day. Its legendary iron discipline kept the men fixed in their ranks.

The war cries of the Celts cut the air. The ground shook as their chariots sped closer with every passing second, and the centurions roared at the men to stand still.

The Britons' biggest battle to date was about to begin.

#### CITY MILITIA

By Boudica's time, the Roman army was a terrifying war machine, as brutal as it was well-organised. Strong training and relentless discipline had forged antiquity's strongest army, which comprised both Roman citizens and aspiring foreigners.



Boudica led more than 200,000 Britons in a revolt against the island's Roman occupiers, but the legionaries mercilessly quashed the uprising.

Everything had changed since the first legions appeared in the 8th century BC. At that time, Roman soldiers were recruited from the three tribes that made up Roman society, each of which provided the Roman army with 1,000 infantry and 100 cavalry. The force was powerful, but no more than the neighbouring towns could muster.

King Servius Tullius, who ruled Rome in the middle of the 6th century BC, was probably responsible for the first changes. He changed Rome's class system – and thus conscription – from being dependent on tribal lineage to being a matter of wealth and social rank. Thus, the army could recruit Romans whose heritage couldn't be traced to the original three tribes.

A crucial feature of Rome's early army was that the soldiers were all relatively wealthy landowners who had to provide their own weapons. There were no professional soldiers – the army was a militia of citizens who bore arms only when they were called upon to go on campaign. War was thus largely an aristocratic affair. Rome's rulers believed that only wealthy citizens had enough at stake to be willing to risk their lives to defend the city. The poor, it was assumed, would just run away.

As the Romans conquered more land, more landowners were created – some of

GAIUS MARIUS c 157-86 BC

### ARMY'S REFORMER

■ Even as a young man, Gaius Marius proved to be an extremely ambitious soldier who purposefully worked his way up the ranks. But he also had political ambitions. After a successful war in North Africa, he convinced the Romans that he should be elected consul – which caused something of a sensation as he was the first consul in his family's history. As consul, he became the leader of Rome's troops in Africa, and embarked

on the reforms he is remembered for today, including enlisting men who didn't come from the land-owning classes. The reforms were a great military success, and enabled the Romans to defeat the Germanic tribes that threatened the republic from the north. As a result, Marius was elected consul seven times. He was never fully accepted by the aristocratic rulers, however, because he lacked their classical Greek education.

Born outside Rome - Worked his way up through the army - Became consul seven times



## DRESSED FOR BATTLE

Around AD 100, Roman legionaries throughout the empire were equipped in pretty much the same way. Large centres, including in northern Italy and Gaul, mass-produced helmets, armour and weapons. All the components were designed to work equally well during marches and in combat.

**ARMOUR.** The most common armour was the lorica segmentata, which weighed 5-7 kg and consisted of 34 steel bands on leather straps. The armour protected the upper body from attack, but had to be constantly polished to avoid rust. Chainmail and scale-armour were also widely used.

**GLADIUS.** The Legionaries' 45-55 cm triangular-tipped steel sword was specially designed for stabbing. The hilt was made of wood, untanned animal skin or ideally bone, which gave the best grip.

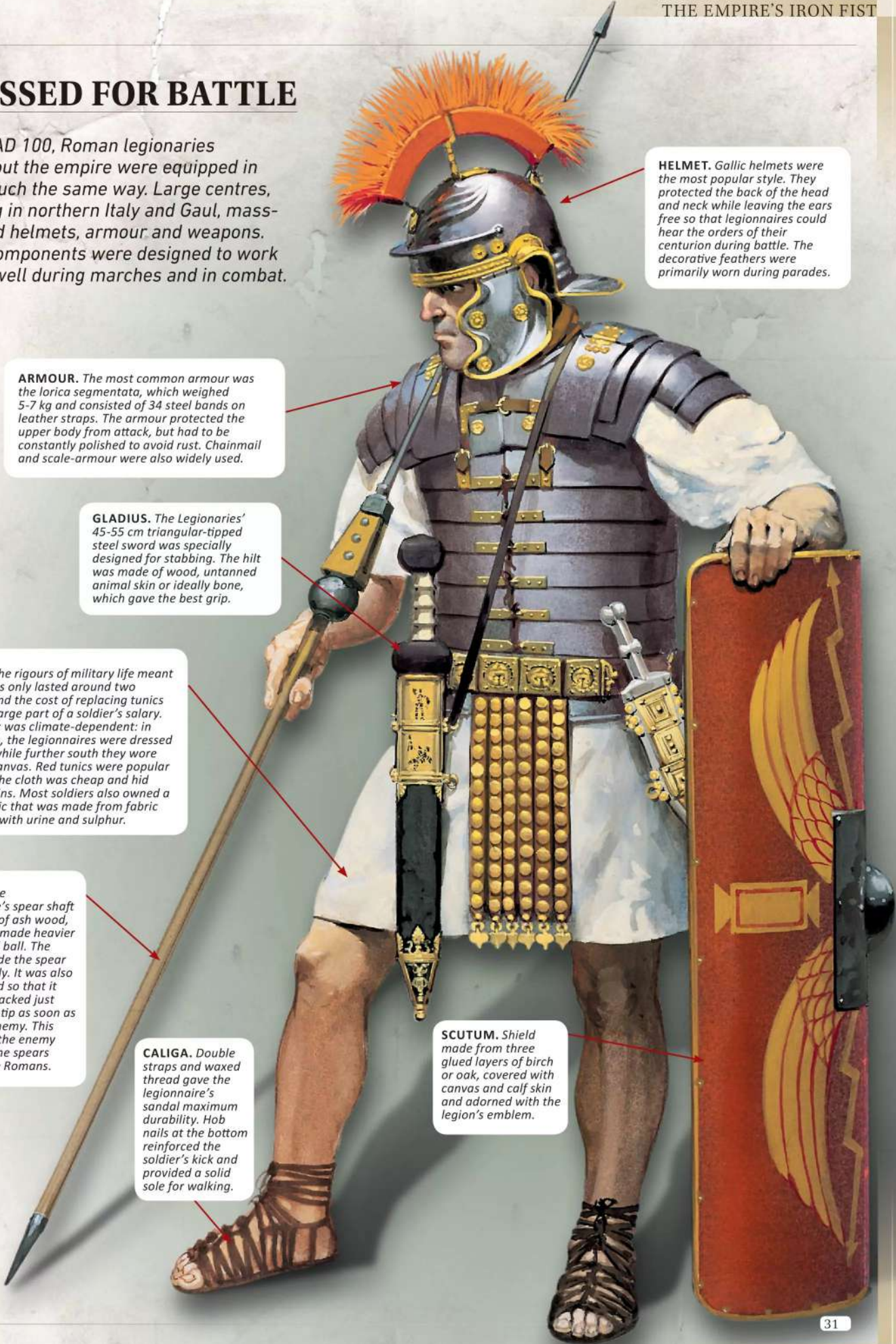
**TUNIC.** The rigours of military life meant that tunics only lasted around two months and the cost of replacing tunics ate up a large part of a soldier's salary. The fabric was climate-dependent: in Germania, the legionnaires were dressed in wool, while further south they wore linen or canvas. Red tunics were popular because the cloth was cheap and hid blood stains. Most soldiers also owned a white tunic that was made from fabric bleached with urine and sulphur.

**PILUM.** The legionnaire's spear shaft was made of ash wood, which was made heavier with a lead ball. The weight made the spear more deadly. It was also constructed so that it broke or cracked just behind the tip as soon as it hit the enemy. This prevented the enemy throwing the spears back at the Romans.

**CALIGA.** Double straps and waxed thread gave the legionnaire's sandal maximum durability. Hob nails at the bottom reinforced the soldier's kick and provided a solid sole for walking.

**SCUTUM.** Shield made from three glued layers of birch or oak, covered with canvas and calf skin and adorned with the legion's emblem.

**HELMET.** Gallic helmets were the most popular style. They protected the back of the head and neck while leaving the ears free so that legionnaires could hear the orders of their centurion during battle. The decorative feathers were primarily worn during parades.





# “The Romans were never slow to throw out old ways of doing things”

>>> the seized land being gifted to Rome's many landless citizens – thus adding to the pool of potential recruits.

## BORROWED TACTICS

It was probably under King Tullius that the citizen army first started to use the phalanx battle formation, which was originally developed by the Greeks and was now the standard formation of the Etruscans, who dominated the landscape north of Rome.

Even at this early stage, a characteristic of the Roman army began to emerge: they constantly learned from the best. The Romans were never slow to throw out old ways of doing things if they found something better than others had invented.

The first of Rome's many enemies came in the form local warrior tribes and rival

city-states, such as the Etruscans in Veii, less than 20 kilometres away, which the Roman army defeated in the 5th century BC. The campaign season began in the spring and ended in autumn – enabling soldiers to return home for the harvest.

As Rome conquered the surrounding areas, the fighting moved further away, up into the Italian mountains, where the opponents were agile tribal warriors. In the mountainous landscape, the heavy phalanx formation became immobile – it was much better for attacks across large, open plains. As a result, the Romans adopted a new tactic. Rather than place all their men in a compact phalanx, they divided them into groups known as maniples: 120 men led by a centurion. The maniples each formed a compact, common front, making it easy for

generals to move them around as needed during a battle and to fight in hilly terrain.

However, the manipular system also worked well during large-scale battles on open plains, where the Romans developed a tactic that allowed them to attack in waves, which opponents found difficult to resist.

Once the Romans were victorious, subjugated cities and tribes had to supply soldiers to the Roman army in return for protection and a share in future Roman conquests. Often, therefore, there were more allied soldiers than Romans in the republic's legions.

## BUILT A FLEET IN 60 DAYS

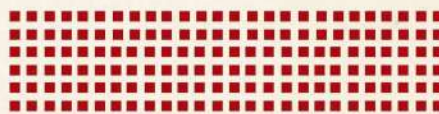
Rome's growing army had its toughest test during the protracted Punic Wars against the great empire of Carthage, which had its capital in present-day Tunisia. The Carthaginians were expert sailors, while the Romans had little to no experience in naval matters. When the wars began in 264 BC, the Romans had to hastily expand their fleet by 120 warships in just 60 days. In 256 BC, in one of the greatest naval battles of the Punic Wars, the Romans deployed as many as 330 ships. Despite 24 of their vessels being sunk, the Romans eventually won the confrontation – not least thanks to the invention of a boarding device known as the *corvus*, which resembled a

## ROMAN WAR TACTICS

### PHALANX – BEFORE 400 BC



In early wars against neighbouring towns, the Romans attacked en masse with lowered spears.



■ The Romans used the phalanx formation during their first wars. This was based on a Greek tactic used by hoplite warriors where men were equipped with large shields and long spears that were used for stabbing. The phalanx formed a solid and impenetrable front against less organised forces, which simply charged forward in headlong attacks – but it was extremely inflexible once battle was joined.

### MANIPLES – FROM CIRCA 400 BC



From around 400 BC, the legion lined up in four rows. At the front there was a row of velites – light warriors equipped with javelins. Behind them, the men formed up in groups of 120 men – the maniples – to create a kind of jointed phalanx.

■ One of the secrets behind the Romans' subjugation of Italy was their ability to attack in waves. First, the velites, the army's youngest and poorest soldiers, hit their opponents with their javelins. Then they fell back, and the hastati, the second youngest soldiers,



drawbridge fitted with an iron spike that pierced the Carthaginian naval vessels, anchoring them in place so that Roman soldiers could board. Again, the Romans showed a formidable ability to adapt tactics to the circumstances.

However, a single victory at sea was far from enough to break Carthage. The Carthaginian general Hannibal crossed the Alps with his army and war elephants, and almost reached the gates of Rome before being defeated, and it wasn't until 146 BC that the Romans finally settled things when they stormed Carthage and razed the city.

#### THE ARMY LACKED RECRUITS

With campaigns being waged further away from Rome, it became impossible for the soldiers to maintain a parallel existence as farmers. Men at war on the Iberian Peninsula could not reach home in time for the harvest, and military service was increasingly resented. At the same time, there were too few potential recruits as land was increasingly held by an entitled elite.

The solution to the recruitment problem was provided by the visionary reformer Gaius Marius. Around 100 BC, the demagogic general and later consul was struggling desperately for soldiers. He therefore took a radical step and made the army a professional organisation. The laws

#### TECHNOLOGY.....



#### CULTURE.....

#### ECONOMY.....

#### EVERY DAY.....

### Towns sprang up by the camps

The Roman legions left two things in their wake: carnage and burgeoning trading centres. The legionnaires often worked as labourers to extend their road network. The soldiers set up camps during this work and

became good customers for local tradespeople, and soon commerce flourished with sales of everything from beer to women. Cities, such as Cologne and Manchester, sprang up wherever the legionnaires were stationed.

that stated that soldiers had to possess property were rescinded, enabling Rome's poor to enlist in the army. The state provided the new recruits with uniform sets of helmets, armour, swords, spears and shields. Soldiers were also rewarded with real pay and had the opportunity to share in the booty after victories.

Suddenly, a whole new career was available for Italy's low-paid agricultural workers, tens of thousands of whom volunteered for years of service under Marius' standards. Rome now had a standing army of professional soldiers who

could be trained all year round, stationed anywhere for as long as needed, and activated in record time when the growing empire required it.

In the beginning, Marius was met with harsh criticism for opening up the army to "lawless, greedy soldiery". In reality, however, Marius had merely legalised a process that had been going on for a century, in which the Romans had repeatedly lowered the amount of property a recruit needed to possess. In any case, such criticism was silenced when Marius' new professional army crushed King

&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;

#### COHORT – FROM CIRCA 100 BC



Around 100 BC, the 480-strong cohort became the basic unit of the legion. This enabled commanders to move their men more quickly.

stormed forward. If their attacks were not enough, the more experienced principes took over. Finally, if necessary, the most experienced triarii would be deployed. The commander's task was to trigger the attack waves at the right times.

■ Around 100 BC, the Roman army turned professional and equipped all the soldiers alike. It also abolished the velites. From that point on, the legionnaires were heavy infantry with javelin, swords, daggers and shields. Attacks still took place in waves, but the men's uniform equipment provided more tactical options. Soldiers could storm forward in wedge formation or use their shields to form a dense tortoise-like testudo to protect against spears and arrows.



>> Jugurtha of Numidia in a war of expansion before dispatching the tens of thousands of Germanic Teuton and Cimbrian tribal warriors threatening Rome from the north.

The period of service for professional legionnaires was extended on several occasions – first to 20 years and later up to 25. After completing his term, a legionnaire could look forward to a pension that was equivalent to 14 years' salary and perhaps a parcel of captured land as a thank you gesture. In return, the soldiers were not allowed to marry, though many had partners who were wives in all but name,

and the authorities turned a blind eye to occasional overnight stays outside the camp. Other legionnaires simply contented themselves with the prostitutes who lived outside the camps.

#### LOCAL RECRUITS

Legionnaires were often recruited from the province in which the legion was stationed. Recruits now simply needed to be a Roman citizen – a status that was granted to more and more of Rome's subjects as the empire grew. Those of the empire's inhabitants who did not have Roman citizenship could enlist for 25 years with the auxiliary troops and thus obtain Roman citizenship for themselves and their children. Auxiliaries were poorly paid, but played a crucial role on the battlefield throughout the life of the empire. In time, they accounted for up to half of Rome's total military force, and although at first they were poorly equipped, the auxiliary legions gradually became almost

indistinguishable to legions manned by Roman citizens.

#### PHYSICAL FITNESS WAS KEY

In the camps, the soldiers were subject to brutal discipline – corporal punishment was dished out even for minor offenses, and those found breaking the rules could even face the death penalty. If a soldier fell asleep while on guard, he was beaten in public, and if an entire unit was disgraced, it might be deprived of meat in its rations, be forced to pitch its tents outside the camp's protective palisades or even be expelled from the army, resulting in the men losing their coveted pensions.

The training was so hard that it may have made the difference in quality between Rome's legions and its opponents' armies. The soldiers regularly made 12-hour forced marches and walked for 30 kilometres wearing full steel armour. Combat training often took place twice a day with wooden swords and shields, that often weighed twice as much as the real

#### 20 arrows

per minute  
could be fired by  
an experienced  
Roman archer.





thing. Since many of the legionnaires were rarely in combat, working instead on construction projects, as police, or within the provincial administration, frequent combat training was paramount to maintaining the legion's force.

To keep morale up, however, the generals made sure that not everything involved chores and bone-numbing training. The legionnaires were entertained with gladiatorial fights, wrestling matches against one another and theatrical performances, where the actresses were typically made available for free after the last act – although centurions often jumped the queue. A legionnaire could also count on one or two weeks' leave a year.

The rest of the time, the soldiers' lives were arranged so that they slept, ate and lived tightly together in small groups of eight men, year in and year out. The result was an army of close-knit units of lifelong friends ready to sacrifice everything for each other in combat situations. At the same time, the generals used banners with symbols, such as wild boar or other wild animals, to strengthen the individual

## TECHNOLOGY.....

## CULTURE.....

## ECONOMY.....

## EVERY DAY.....



## Legionnaires dug to stay in shape

A Roman legion could go for years without going into battle, but it was vital that the men stayed in good shape, so they were given endless digging to do. During the Punic Wars, General Scipio introduced a tough new regime to

overcome laxity in his men. He expelled local traders and harlots from the camp and made his men build a new camp every day, digging ditches and throwing up ramparts, which were then destroyed the next day.

soldier's sense of belonging to an elite body of men. The army became the legionnaire's sole identity while he served.

### COWARDS WERE BEATEN TO DEATH

The Romans had no secret weapon to explain their great success on the battlefield – but they had iron discipline, exceptional organisation and a bloody reputation. From the beginning, strong, charismatic leaders took the lead in the fighting and partook in the suffering of the soldiers – people like Caesar and Antony, who were probably cynical enough to sacrifice their

men in battle, but who also dared to risk their own lives for victory.

In return, they demanded blind loyalty in battle. Units who ran away or otherwise exhibited cowardly behaviour during a battle were severely disciplined. The worst punishment was decimation: an old sentence in which generals randomly selected one tenth of the men from the >>>

The Gallic king Vercingetorix signalled his surrender by laying his armour and weapons at Caesar's feet. Caesar thanked the Gaul by imprisoning him in Rome for over five years, before putting him on public display and beheading him.





The soldiers' training took place with shields, swords and wooden spears, often several times a day. The training equipment was up to twice as heavy as the combat equipment used in battle. During training, the legionaries learned to use the sword tip, instead of the edge, to wound their opponent more deeply.

>>>> disgraced unit and ordered the remainder to beat them to death with clubs.

#### AUGUSTUS TOOK OVER THE ARMY

The legions' fighting skills were constantly honed as the Romans continued to copy successful tactics from their opponents – they incorporated archers after encounters with the Persians and took ship designs from Carthage, while large parts of their cavalry relied on auxiliary troops recruited from peoples with greater horsemanship than themselves.

The result was an army built around a core of heavily equipped infantry, but which gave its generals plenty of other options when necessary – from lightning-fast cavalry to a combat-ready fleet.

On the battlefield, the Roman generals relied on simple but highly developed tactics, which they adapted according to the circumstances – along with highly disciplined soldiers who always obeyed orders.

The only disadvantage that came with having ever stronger and more cohesive legions was that they sometimes proved more loyal to each other and their respective generals than to Rome's senate – especially during the last decades of the republic. Contrary to the law, successful generals, such as Julius Caesar, occasionally led their armies into Rome itself and seized power. And at times, the Romans used at least as much force in fighting each other as in keeping enemies at bay.

Emperor Augustus put an end to the problem – at least temporarily. After defeating his

With their narrow, heavy iron tips, the Romans' spears could often pierce both their opponents' shields and armour.

enemies and establishing himself as Rome's *Princeps Civitatis* (First Citizen) in 27 BC, he trimmed the army from 60 to 28 legions, which he stationed along the empire's borders, which now stretched for thousands of kilometres. Inside Italy itself, Augustus established a new Praetorian Guard with 9,000 men, which was tasked with defending Rome and the newly established imperial power. To ensure the loyalty of the Praetorian Guards, they were paid three times more than any other legionnaires.

Initially, Augustus paid for Rome's new guard from his personal fortune, but later set up a state fund to cover the expenses. He made a first large payment himself, after which the army's coffers were replenished by taxes – another new innovation.

Rome now had a tax-funded standing army that was without equal in the world, and for nearly 200 years that was enough to prevent many potential enemies and rebels from challenging Rome's power, but not Britannia's warrior queen Boudica.

#### WEDGE FORMATION SPREAD PANIC

When the queen's bellowing fighters stormed towards the legionnaire's stoic lines in the late spring of AD 60, they were charging headlong into a Roman war machine in its prime in terms of organisation, equipment and tactics. The Celts' chariots careened across the battlefield trailing clouds of dust behind them, but the Romans didn't blink. At the back, Roman spearmen raised their weapons, ready to throw. But the rebels hurled theirs first. The Celts' spears flew through the air, but the Romans parried most with their broad shields.

Then the Roman commander issued an order. A *cornu* horn sounded above the din and, in response, the centurions bellowed out commands to let the spears fly. All at

once, thousands of Roman javelins filled the sky. Seconds later, they fell to earth, piercing the British in their chariots. Panic started to spread among the Britons, but the frenzied Celtic infantry stormed forward relentlessly. Two quick calls from the horn rang out from the Roman lines. It was the signal for the legionnaires to gather in wedge formations. Almost as one, the Romans drew their swords and assembled in three large, dense wedges facing the enemy. Then came the call to advance.

The three compact wedges moved forward. This was just one of the many formations the Romans had mastered, but their Celtic opponents had never encountered anything like it before: the Roman shields moved up and down as the legionnaires' advanced, while their swords whirled above them like a giant threshing machine. Seconds later, the wedges began hacking through the Celtic lines, while on the flanks, the Roman cavalry moved in, pushing their lances into the faces of the terrified Celts.

The rebels at the front panicked and tried to get away, but collided with those warriors still storming forward from behind. Suddenly the Celts were hemmed in on all sides. Their superior numbers were now working against them – the hordes of fearsome, shrieking warriors had been transformed into a frantic, disorganised mob, looking desperately for escape. As the Romans threshed their way forwards, hundreds of Celts were trampled by their fleeing comrades.

The Romans pushed on like a killing machine, mowing down women spectators and the Celts' horses along with the rest.

In an hour or two, the carnage was over. Legio XIV had killed 70,000 warriors and 10,000 British women. Queen Boudica had taken flight through the forest in her chariot.

"As the Romans threshed their way forwards, hundreds of Celts were trampled by their fleeing comrades".

#### LEGIONS SECURED PEACE

Demonstrations of power such as the destruction of Boudica's rebel army were crucial to securing the long-lasting *pax romana*, the

Roman peace that allowed life to flourish throughout the Roman Empire, while the legions quelled rebellions and kept rampaging tribes at a safe distance.

However, by the 4th century the Romans were running into trouble, as legions under the leadership of power-hungry generals began fighting over imperial power. Matters were made worse when the empire was later attacked by Persians, Huns and Germanic tribes. The strikes came at the worst possible time, when there was little money in the treasury to pay the legionnaires' salaries, and morale and loyalty were correspondingly low.

But before then, Rome's legions had dominated the battlefields of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa for 800 years – a feat unsurpassed either before or since. And so, when Boudica gathered the Celtic Britons in revolt against the Roman occupiers, the legionnaires put down the uprising without mercy.



# LEGIONNAIRES CARRIED IT ALL

Roman soldiers had to march quickly towards the battlefield. Therefore, they carried all their gear on their shoulder using a simple wooden cross known as a *furca*.

Sheep fat made the soldier's thick woollen cloak waterproof – but it also made it stink of sheep.

The drinking bottle was made of leather or a hollowed-out gourd and was attached to the pack by a net.

The satchel, which was called a *loculus*, contained a tent, personal belongings and rations, including the hard tack biscuits known as *buccellatum*, which remained edible for years.

The average legionnaire's pack weighed around 9 kg. The equipment was attached to a *furca* – a 120 cm long wooden cross, which the legionnaire could quickly throw down in an emergency.

A shallow bowl, known as a *patera*, was essential to the everyday life of a legionnaire. It was made of bronze and used as a cup, food bowl and general pot.

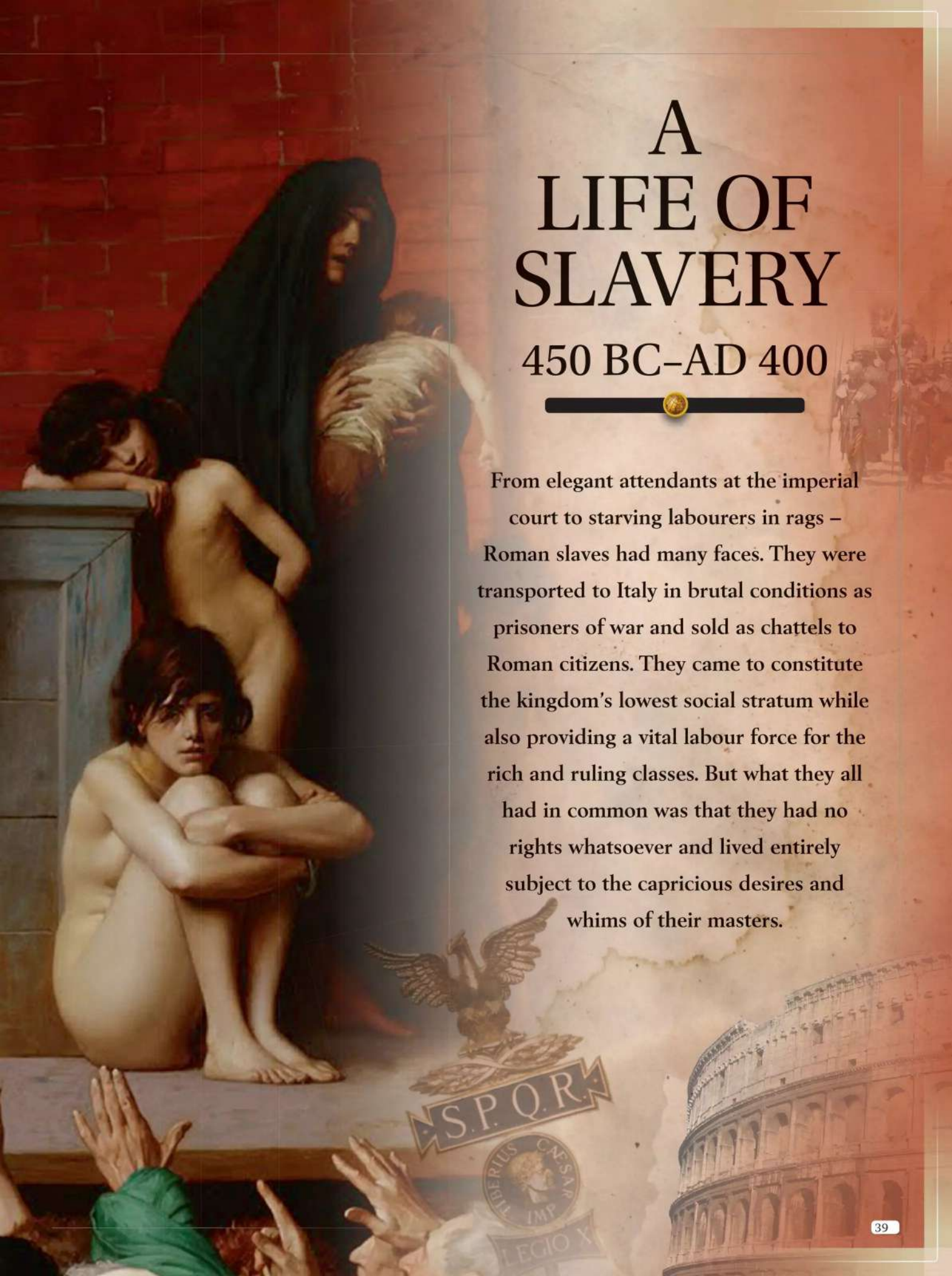
The legionaries used a shovel for lifting turf when building fortifications around the camps or before battle.

The pickaxe was used when the legion's 5,000 men arrived at a new camp. Within three hours, the unit could build an entire camp, complete with defensive ditches and ramparts.









# A LIFE OF SLAVERY

450 BC–AD 400

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From elegant attendants at the imperial court to starving labourers in rags – Roman slaves had many faces. They were transported to Italy in brutal conditions as prisoners of war and sold as chattels to Roman citizens. They came to constitute the kingdom's lowest social stratum while also providing a vital labour force for the rich and ruling classes. But what they all had in common was that they had no rights whatsoever and lived entirely subject to the capricious desires and whims of their masters.



## 450 BC-AD 400

**450 BC** The Twelve Tables, Rome's constitution, lay down rules for slavery.

**146 BC** 55,000 prisoners of war from Carthage become slaves in Rome.



**AD 58** Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars bring one million new slaves to Rome.

**AD 70** Titus celebrates his victory over Judea with a triumphal parade.

In AD 70, Emperor Vespasian's son Titus celebrated his victory over Judea with a mighty triumphal procession through the streets of Rome. From a throne on his chariot, the army commander received the people's tribute, while his precious booty was displayed to the crowds. The spectators had a clear view of artefacts made of gold, ivory and precious stones, along with a large seven-branched menorah, which Titus had stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem. But the parade also featured other trophies: thousands of prisoners of war – which, according to the Roman historian Josephus, were of the finest kind.

"[E]ven the great number of the captives was not unadorned," Josephus remarked. Defeated enemies were a regular feature of Roman triumphal processions and an important component of the loot brought back from Roman expeditions.

The conquests from 200 BC to AD 200 – which enabled the empire to spread from Britain in the north across the Black Sea in the east to the Sahara in the south – provided the Romans with thousands and thousands of prisoners of war, who became enslaved to their victors. The same fate would befall the prisoners in Titus's triumphal procession – they would become part of the multimillion-strong slave force that formed both Rome's underclass and the economic basis of world domination.

#### EVERY THIRD PERSON WAS A SLAVE

For the spectators who watched Titus's procession, slavery was a regular part of everyday life. The Twelve Tables, which laid down the constitution of the Roman Republic from about the year 450 BC, were evidence that slavery was quite common in

the earliest years of the Roman Empire. Among other things, the constitution included rules governing the release of slaves, expressed how slaves were inherited, and contained laws for the punishment of slaves who stole. According to historians, because the tables revealed much about how Roman society was conducted before they were even drawn up, the rules governing slaves suggest that slavery was already an established part of life in Rome.

Imports of slaves increased in step with the Romans' success on the battlefield. Gauls, Greeks, Germans, Celts, Thracians and other so-called barbarians, whom the Romans defeated in Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa, were taken to Rome in chains. In the year 167 BC, as many as 150,000 people from Epirus – an area in present-day Greece and Albania – had to endure being sold as goods in the Roman slave markets, and in 146 BC, 55,000 people were enslaved after the destruction of the city of Carthage.

Historians estimate that the Italian peninsula at that time housed two to three million slaves – a figure that, if correct, means every third inhabitant was a slave.

#### PRISONERS OF WAR IN CHAINS

The slaves were brutally torn from their homes and forced to travel to Rome under miserable conditions. Pirates and slave traders were responsible for transporting the prisoners of war from the provinces to their new masters. For instance, pirates from Cilicia – part of present-day Turkey – directed the movement of slaves across the island of Delos in the Aegean Sea.

As with the shipments of black slaves to America, slave traders crammed the prisoners together in as little space as



In the time of Emperor Augustus, a slave cost 500 denarii, while a beautiful slave girl cost 6,000. The daily wage of an unskilled craftsman was one denarius.

possible while at sea, and the provisions were only just enough to keep the slaves alive. While thousands died of disease on the narrow decks, others chose to take their own lives in desperation, by jumping overboard. Those who reached the slave ports were often used to haul heavy loads during their onward march to Rome. A memorial stone erected in honour of a slave trader from the Black Sea region reveals that the slaves were driven forward in groups of eight chained together.

#### SOLD AS ANIMALS

The prisoners who survived the journey to Rome reached a land with foreign customs and an incomprehensible language. Trade in the slave markets was regulated in the same way as livestock auctions. The purpose was clear: to ensure buyers didn't go home

#### TECHNOLOGY

#### CULTURE

#### ECONOMY

#### DAILY LIFE



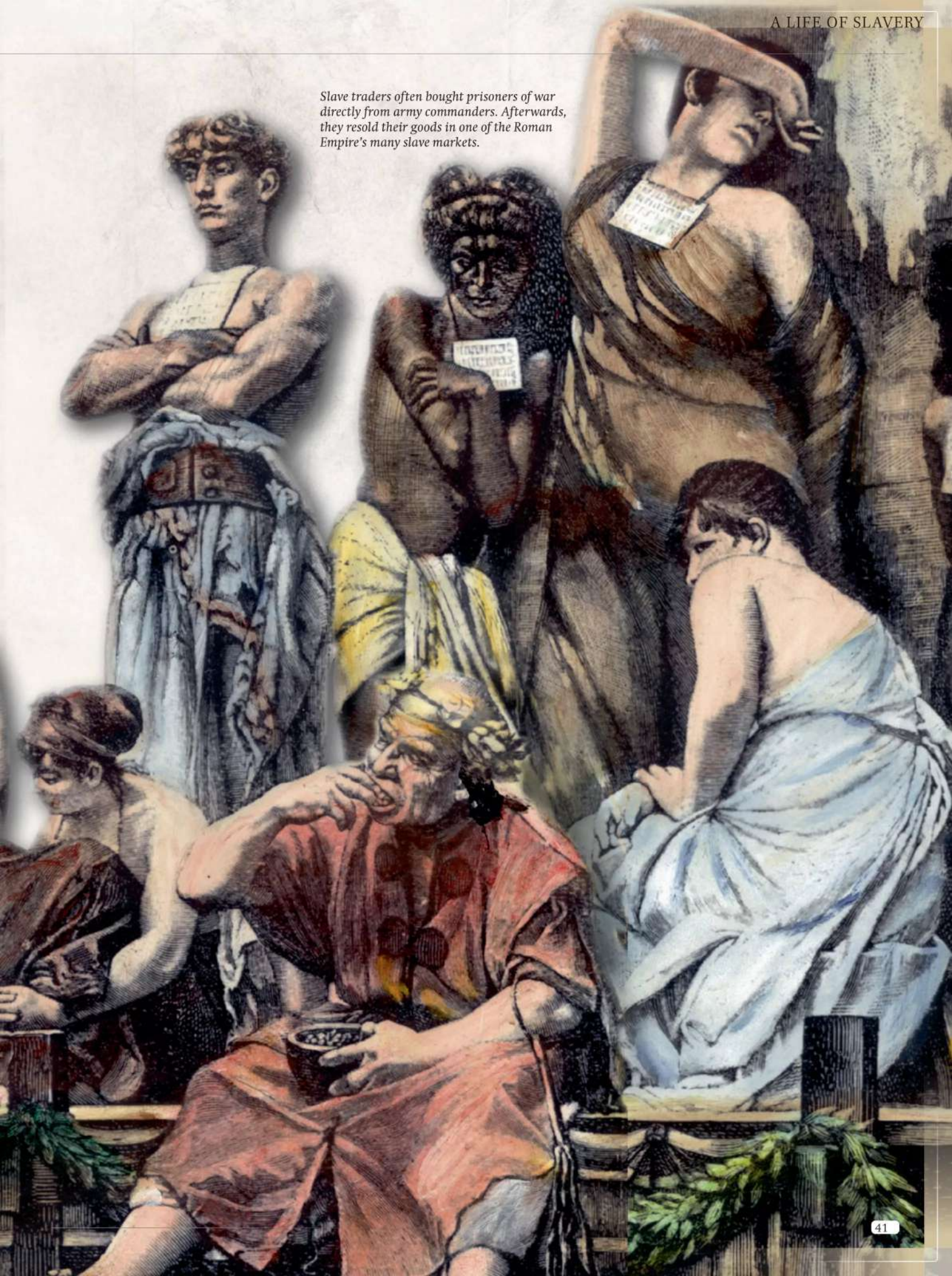
#### State slaves kept Rome clean

Rome had its own corps of slaves, *servus publicus* – servants of the people or the state. Street sweepers and sewer cleaners had to clear up after the large city's inhabitants, while others toiled to build roads, temples and aqueducts, or

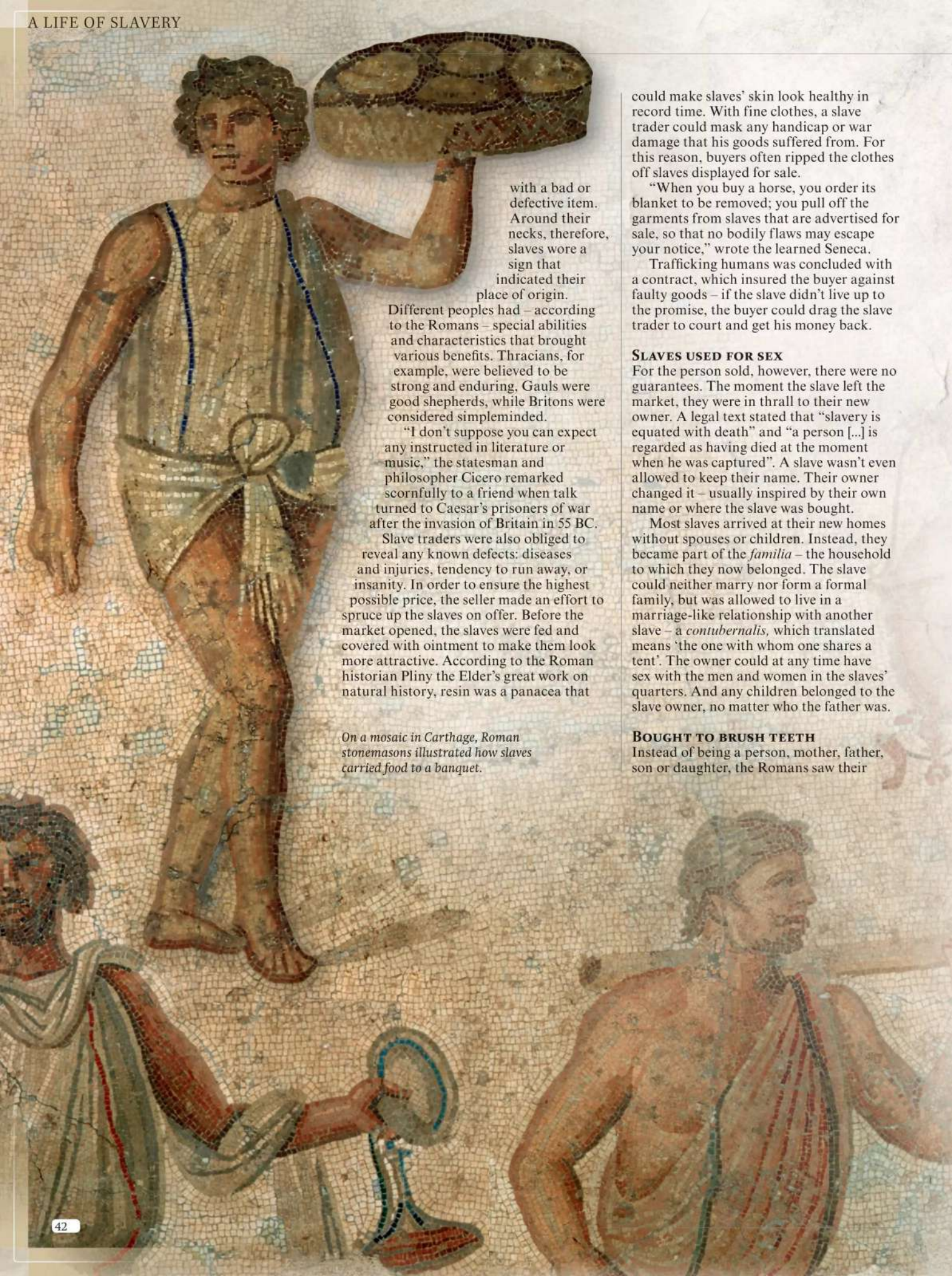
as temple servants. The better educated also had the opportunity to work as a secretary or accountant in the capital's administration or at the Collegium Pontificum – Rome's supreme religious authority.



Slave traders often bought prisoners of war directly from army commanders. Afterwards, they resold their goods in one of the Roman Empire's many slave markets.







with a bad or defective item. Around their necks, therefore, slaves wore a sign that indicated their place of origin.

Different peoples had – according to the Romans – special abilities and characteristics that brought various benefits. Thracians, for example, were believed to be strong and enduring. Gauls were good shepherds, while Britons were considered simpleminded.

“I don’t suppose you can expect any instructed in literature or music,” the statesman and philosopher Cicero remarked scornfully to a friend when talk turned to Caesar’s prisoners of war after the invasion of Britain in 55 BC.

Slave traders were also obliged to reveal any known defects: diseases and injuries, tendency to run away, or insanity. In order to ensure the highest possible price, the seller made an effort to spruce up the slaves on offer. Before the market opened, the slaves were fed and covered with ointment to make them look more attractive. According to the Roman historian Pliny the Elder’s great work on natural history, resin was a panacea that

could make slaves’ skin look healthy in record time. With fine clothes, a slave trader could mask any handicap or war damage that his goods suffered from. For this reason, buyers often ripped the clothes off slaves displayed for sale.

“When you buy a horse, you order its blanket to be removed; you pull off the garments from slaves that are advertised for sale, so that no bodily flaws may escape your notice,” wrote the learned Seneca.

Trafficking humans was concluded with a contract, which insured the buyer against faulty goods – if the slave didn’t live up to the promise, the buyer could drag the slave trader to court and get his money back.

#### SLAVES USED FOR SEX

For the person sold, however, there were no guarantees. The moment the slave left the market, they were in thrall to their new owner. A legal text stated that “slavery is equated with death” and “a person [...] is regarded as having died at the moment when he was captured”. A slave wasn’t even allowed to keep their name. Their owner changed it – usually inspired by their own name or where the slave was bought.

Most slaves arrived at their new homes without spouses or children. Instead, they became part of the *familia* – the household to which they now belonged. The slave could neither marry nor form a formal family, but was allowed to live in a marriage-like relationship with another slave – a *contubernalis*, which translated means ‘the one with whom one shares a tent’. The owner could at any time have sex with the men and women in the slaves’ quarters. And any children belonged to the slave owner, no matter who the father was.

#### BOUGHT TO BRUSH TEETH

Instead of being a person, mother, father, son or daughter, the Romans saw their

On a mosaic in Carthage, Roman stonemasons illustrated how slaves carried food to a banquet.



slaves as tools to be used to complete everyday tasks. Their value depended on the execution of the work and how compliant the slave was to his master. In smaller households, the slaves were all-rounders, helping in the kitchen, caring for children, and working in the fields.

For others, slaves served as shop managers, ships' captains or artisans with some degree of personal freedom, and slaves in the imperial administration could rise through the ranks and become secretaries or bookkeepers. Many slaves, however, were destined for life on a farm in the countryside, where they endured particularly harsh conditions. As shepherds, the slaves had to build themselves huts of straw, mud or peat, while following the owner's herd from one grazing area to another. The shepherds usually slept on the bare ground, whatever the weather. Other farm slaves looked after chickens, cared for sick livestock or

The majority, however, lived in their owner's villa – usually two or three slaves together in a small room that was separate from but near to the owner's living space. Excavations of one of Pompeii's large villas revealed that the house slaves had lived down in the basement, at the end of a long, narrow, underground passage, where they were hidden from their owners' view.

A slave's clothes were matched to their work. In households of the elite and at the emperor's court, male slaves often wore fine uniforms, while the women wore dresses and jewellery when they accompanied their master or served at the table. Field slaves, on the other hand, had to settle for a more spartan costume; according to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, a group of Sicilian farm workers wore wolf and boar skins because their owner refused them clothes. Another slave owner informed his slaves that if they wanted clothes, they had to steal them from passers-by.

And while the daily meals were plentiful, the diet was repetitive and nutritionally poor. The slaves ate bread, bread and more bread, and according to Cato, typically received “Four modii [35 litres] of wheat in winter, and in summer four and a half [40 litres] ... The chain-gang should have a ration of four pounds of bread through the winter, raising to five when they begin to work the vines, and dropping back to four when the figs ripen.”

Cato was known for living modestly, but his advice to slave owners was not about



*Following their military campaigns, the Romans took thousands of prisoners of war, who eventually ended up being sold in the empire's slave markets. Julius Caesar's conquests of Gaul in 58-51 BC saw the Romans secure millions of prisoners. Historians don't know exactly how many slaves served Rome, but the number of prisoners of war taken after important battles gives an idea of the total.*



## EYEWITNESS

Lucius Apuleius Platonius/AD 165

## SLAVES IN THE MILL



“Creatures ... whose lacerated backs and shoulders, shaded rather than covered with ragged cloaks, were marked with black and blue wheals; their heads half-shaved; their foreheads branded with letters; their faces of ghastly paleness, their eyes, from the vaporous heat of dark smoky chambers, sore and rheumy, their eyelids glued together, and their ankles encompassed by heavy iron rings. ... [T]he entire bodies ... were sprinkled over with a dirty mixture of flour and ashes like the dust of an amphitheatre.”

*The depiction is from a work of fiction, but based on real life.*

major slave uprisings were a rarity – especially after the slave Spartacus’s revolt in the 70s BC, which ended with around 6,000 rebels being crucified and displayed as a warning on a Roman highway, the via Appia. Instead, slaves resorted to more indirect forms of resistance. We know from Roman lawsuits that masters regularly had problems with slaves pretending to be ill, pilfering, running away or simply working deliberately slowly, though it was unusual for a case to end up in court. Instead, slave owners punished offenders themselves – quickly and severely.

In the countryside, troublesome slaves were imprisoned – ideally in a building with narrow windows so high up that the slaves couldn’t reach them, as advised by the Roman author Columella in his work on agriculture from the first century AD.

And although escape was considered impossible for slaves held captive hundreds of miles from their homeland, some were branded or tattooed on the face as a warning to others and to any future owners that the slave tended to run away. If a slave owner caught a runaway, they could prevent further escapes by riveting a metal collar that bore a warning around the slave’s neck.

“Hold on to me, because I am fleeing” was engraved in the metal. The use of the collars was so widespread that over time the message was abbreviated to “TMQF” for the warning “Tene me quia fugio.”

## OWNERS BOUGHT PUNISHMENTS

Disobedient slaves also risked getting a taste of the whip or other instruments of cruelty. If the owner didn’t want to do the dirty work himself, he could pay someone else to do it. Mortuary workers from the town of Puteoli in the south-eastern part of the Italian peninsula, for instance, offered to punish slaves to order. A wall inscription from the first century AD sets out the business conditions: “[T]he contractor must supply the posts, chains, ropes for floggers and the floggers themselves. The person having the punishment inflicted is to pay ... the floggers and the executioner four sesterces each.” The amount equated to less than half a day’s salary for a secretary.

Ultimately, the slave owner could choose to have the slave killed using

the most degrading form of executions. Rebellious slaves were thrown on a fire or to wild beasts; others were hung on a cross. The death penalty was meted out to slaves who, for instance, failed to protect their master from danger. Emperor Hadrian sentenced to death a female slave who had been threatened with murder if she raised the alarm when her owner was assaulted.

“So that all other slaves may not think that when their masters are in danger each should look after himself,” he reasoned.

Another punishment that, in practice, was on a par with execution was being sentenced to life as a gladiator or galley slave. On hulking Roman galleys, slaves strained at the oars to ferry their masters or the army around the Mediterranean. Life on board was relentless; galley slaves were often forced to row until they died of exhaustion.

## SLAVERY WAS FOR LIFE

In desperation, more and more slaves risked their lives and tried to murder their master. Killing was a slave’s last resort. Around the year AD 200, the Roman jurist Callistratus wrote that slaves who conspired against their owner were usually burned alive.

Slave owner Larcius Macedo, described by lawyer and author Pliny the Younger as a cruel man, was taking a bath when his slaves assaulted him, beat him half-conscious and dragged him out on to the hot pavement to make it look as though Macedo had collapsed from heat stroke. Unfortunately for the slaves, their master lived long enough “to see the same punishment meted out as for murder”.

There are also writings that testify to how the Roman citizen Pedanius Secundus was killed by his slaves when he withdrew a promise of liberation. These assaults were just a few of many examples of conspiracies against Roman slave owners.

Being freed was possible, but it was a rarity that only a few – such as the imperial slaves who worked as secretaries or as the emperor’s personal servants – ever enjoyed. A slave could be freed as part of his owner’s will, while in other cases, the slave could

buy – or be bought – their freedom from the state or a private individual. The authorities had to approve the release, which then gave the slave citizenship with rights on an equal footing with other free citizens. Their past as a slave, however, still clung to them. The lack of family could be a source of mockery and exclusion. For example, in practice, a freed slave might have found it difficult to stand for election – despite

**500,000**  
new slaves  
flooded into  
Rome each  
year during the  
empire’s heyday,  
around AD 1.

## COLLARS PREVENTED ESCAPE

The hierarchy that permeated Roman society kept slaves in an iron grasp, and

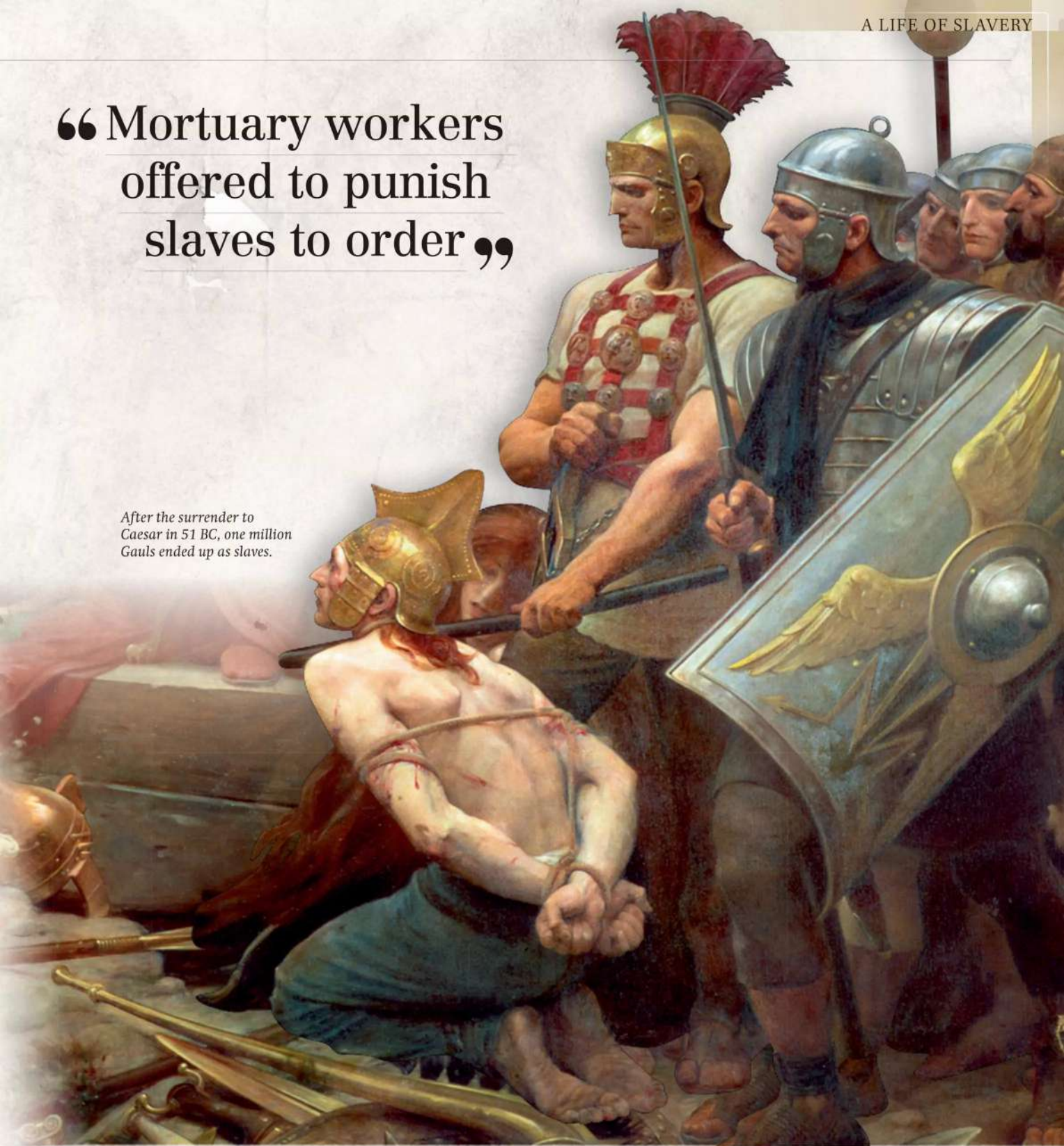


Leg irons ensured that slaves did not run away but still had their hands free to work.



# “Mortuary workers offered to punish slaves to order”

*After the surrender to Caesar in 51 BC, one million Gauls ended up as slaves.*



having the right to do so – because their lack of family ties made it virtually impossible to raise the necessary money and support for their campaign. Freed slaves could also be required to continue working for their former master for a certain number of days a year.

Roman sources tell of one remarkable slave who managed to break away from the

usual path of the serving underclass and reach the very top of society. Historians don't know his name, but he was born in Asia Minor shortly before the year AD 1 and served the army commander Tiberius, who later set him free. The freed slave attached himself to Caligula and worked his way up under Claudius and then Nero, until he could boast of being secretary to


Emperor Vespasian. The emperor made his secretary a knight, and the former slave then married a free woman, who bore him two free sons.

This kind of success story, however, was highly unusual in everyday life in the empire. Most of Rome's slaves died as they'd lived – in slavery, without a name, and with no heirs or descendants. ■









# SPARTACUS SHOOK THE EMPIRE

73-71 BC

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In 73 BC, a single slave succeeded in making a military superpower tremble with fear. Faced with the prospect of dying in the arena, the young gladiator Spartacus embarked on a bloody battle of rebellion. Together with 74 other slaves, he broke out of the gladiatorial school where he was being held captive and embarked upon a two-year journey through Italy. The small group of slaves grew to number around 60,000 vengeful warriors who plundered cities, crushed legions and spread death and destruction in their wake.





## 73-71 BC

**73 BC** Spartacus and followers break out of gladiatorial school in Capua.

**73 BC** Slave army camps on Vesuvius and prepares for battle.

**72 BC** The insurgent slaves fight off the Romans.



**72 BC** They plan to occupy Sicily's beaches on the Strait of Messina.

**71 BC** Spartacus dies in battle against General Crassus's army.

One day in the spring of 73 BC, the gladiator Spartacus made a life-changing decision. Along with hundreds of other slaves, he was being held captive at the gladiatorial school in the city of Capua, south of Rome, and knew what fate awaited him. The daily training the slaves undertook was merely preparation for when the Romans would lock them in the arena and order them to fight to the death against other gladiators or wild beasts. Spartacus knew that with his strength and a good dose of luck, he might be able to stay alive for a few years. But sooner or later, his fortune would change. Like an animal, he would be killed for the horror and amusement of an audience of Roman citizens.

Although the gladiators were keenly guarded night and day, Spartacus devised a daring escape plan. Together with 200 other slaves, he would seize the gladiatorial school's weapons, kill the guards and fight his way to freedom.

As the moment for their ambush approached, Spartacus grew restless. Suddenly, the prison-like building resounded with loud shouts. One of the prisoners had betrayed his comrades and warned the Roman sentries. The rebels' plan to overpower the guards and fight their way to freedom with swords, spears

and daggers from the armoury would no longer work. Lightning fast, the rebels improvised, and together made their way to the kitchen. Here they desperately grabbed anything that could be used as a weapon: long skewers, sharp butcher's knives, tools and anything that could chop, pierce or cut. Armed with the kitchen utensils, they threw themselves at the school's guards, who defended themselves with swords and spears. The many hours of combat training at the gladiatorial school finally paid off for the rebels. They slaughtered the guards without mercy and fled the school to freedom.

**35** years after Spartacus's slave revolt, the Roman historian Sallust wrote about his feats.

The escape attempt was successful, but the danger was far from over for the slaves. The Roman Empire was notorious for brutally crushing any rebellion. Armed with just simple kitchen implements, there was every chance of being killed at any moment. But to

the luck and astonishment of the slaves, they saw a wagon, heavily laden with gladiator weapons, rattling its way towards them. The rebels stopped the wagon and armed themselves with *gladius* swords – after which gladiators are named – spears and deadly tridents, which were guaranteed to send an extra shudder through the arena's spectators.

#### CELTS AND GERMANS ON THE RUN

Emboldened, the escapees continued along the country road to the south. According to the historian Sallust, only 74 of the original 200 rebels escaped. But as they marched off wearing coarse garments and armed with deadly weapons, the gladiators were a terrifying sight. Most of the group were Celts, Germans and Thracians – men who had felt Rome's iron fist early in life. The German and Celtic gladiators – or their parents – like many of Rome's slaves, had arrived in Italy as prisoners of war 30 years earlier, after General Marius's campaign against their tribes in northern Europe. Thrace was also a major supplier of slaves to Rome. The country west of the Black Sea was known for its brutal wars against Rome and for its tall, athletic warriors,

*Spartacus is often portrayed as strong and fearless, but this 1871 statue shows his defeat.*



The arena in Capua, south of Rome, is near the school where Spartacus trained as a gladiator.

who loved combat, hunting and large jugs of good wine.

Spartacus was one of them. As a young man, his hometown had been invaded by the Roman dictator Sulla, who'd plundered and abused the local population. He also forced young, strong men, like Spartacus, to fight for their enemy in the *Auxilia*, the Roman auxiliary troops. The foreign soldiers were subject to strict discipline and demands of unconditional loyalty.

Like many other Roman auxiliaries, Spartacus deserted but was captured by during his escape. In chains, he was taken to Capua, just over 200 kilometres south of Rome, where gladiators were trained so that the elite of Roman society could hire them to fight at funerals, tournaments and events intended to boost the political careers of wealthy patrons. Humiliation was part of everyday life for the gladiators.

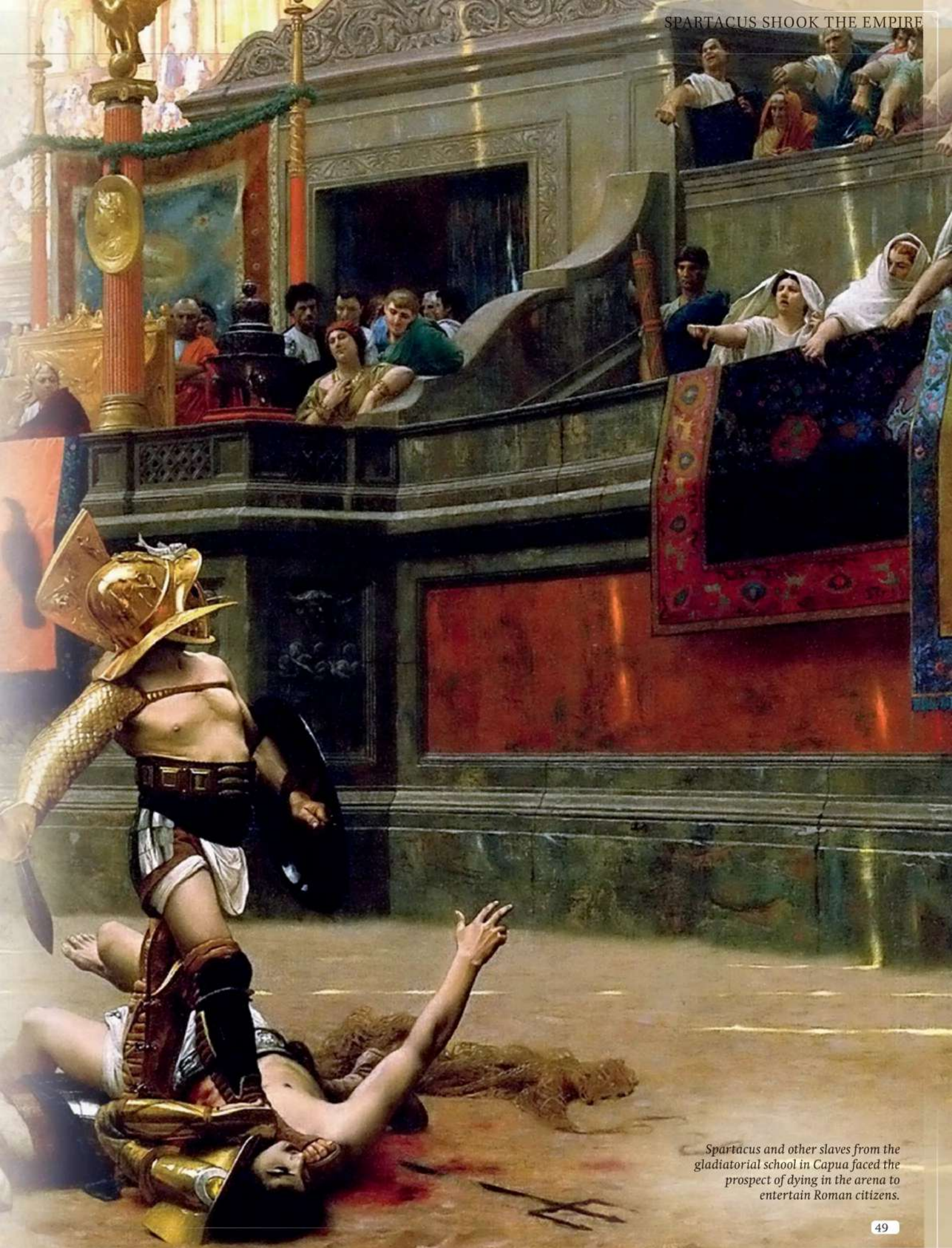
Fighting to the death as a gladiator was usually a punishment reserved for hardened criminals, but Spartacus was no lawbreaker. Neither was the Celt Crixus, who jointly led the escape with Spartacus. Together they'd taken back their freedom. Now they had to survive.

#### SLAVES FORMED AN ARMY

The rebels camped on Mount Vesuvius, 32 kilometres south of Capua. About 100 years later, the dormant volcano would bury the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in an inferno of lava and ash. But in Spartacus's time, it was still a peaceful spot, overgrown with beech, pine and apple trees, making it easy for the slave army to hide on the slopes. Even on the hottest sunny day, a haze hung around the top of the 1,200-metre peak. The rebels had easy access to provisions; they could forage in the woods and lush fields of the slopes.

When local Capua soldiers tracked down Spartacus's group, the Romans felt the strength of the slaves' will to fight for their freedom. They slaughtered the legionaries and took the opportunity to plunder the enemy for weapons and equipment. Spears, breastplates and helmets were a welcome addition to the gladiators' arsenal. They also robbed large villas and farms in the





Spartacus and other slaves from the gladiatorial school in Capua faced the prospect of dying in the arena to entertain Roman citizens.



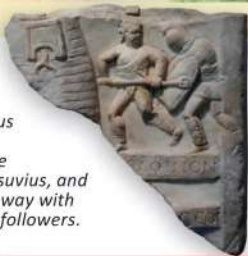
# SLAVE ARMY WANDERED FOR TWO YEARS



Spartacus's troops plundered and fought throughout the Italian peninsula until, in 72 BC, the severely weakened rebel army was caught between two Roman armies in the south.

## CAPUA

■ 200 km south of Rome, Spartacus and 74 other trainees revolt and break out of Lentulus Batiatus's school of gladiators. They migrate towards the volcano Vesuvius, and are bolstered along the way with both weapons and new followers.



## VESUVIUS

■ The slaves camp on the wooded mountainside of the volcano. Using their cunning, the rebels defeat a Roman force before heading south.



## THURII

■ The slave army prepares for another clash with the Romans. In the city's forges, slave chains are turned into swords and arrowheads.



## APENNINE MOUNTAINS

■ The Romans surround Spartacus, but he manages to break free. Shortly after, he honours his dead co-leader Crixus with a bonfire and a performance in which captured Romans fight each other like gladiators.

## GARGANO MOUNTAIN

■ The slave army has split in two. The Romans defeat the smaller battalion led by Spartacus's comrade Crixus, who dies during the battle.



## SILIARIUS RIVER

■ The slave army is trapped between two Roman armies. In a crucial battle, Spartacus dies and the slave army immediately crumbles.



ITALY

ROME ●

MESSINA STRAIT

CRASSUS'S WALL

Crixus's route

Spartacus's route

0 200 km

## PIRATES SPOILT BOLD ESCAPE PLAN

By 72 BC, the fate of the slave army was on a knife edge. Their plan was to occupy Sicily, seize power over the Roman province and live in freedom. The rebels looked over the Messina Strait. Only three km of

water separated the rebels from their dream. But Spartacus searched in vain for the pirates who'd promised to sail the slaves across. The rebels had to turn around, and the fortunes of war turned with them.

## CRUCIAL MOMENTS



The empire took the threat so seriously that Crassus was sent out with eight legions to defeat Spartacus.



MARCUS LICINIUS CRASSUS 115-53 BC

## RICH MAN CRUSHED SPARTACUS

■ Marcus Licinius Crassus came from a family of leading politicians and was destined for a place at the pinnacle of Roman society. In his youth, however, Rome had been ravaged by civil war, and Crassus found it difficult to kick-start his career. He only began to find success when he joined the dictator Sulla in 84 BC. During Sulla's brutal purges, believed to have cost about 5,000 lives, Crassus profited from buying up the victims'

properties. Historians believe he was one of Rome's richest men. In 71 BC, the property speculator gained fame when he defeated Spartacus's revolt, and nine years later, he joined forces with Caesar and Pompey to lead Rome in the First Triumvirate. In 53 BC, Crassus went to war against the Parthian Empire – the Roman Empire's rival to the east. Here he was ambushed and killed when the Romans suffered a crippling defeat.

**Army commander – Rich man – Part of the Triumvirate**



>>>> area. In addition to jewellery, terracotta pots and other valuable household items, there was plenty of bread, cheese and olive oil, and even delicacies such as ostrich eggs and vintage wines. After the raids, the rebels shared the food and valuables equally among themselves.

Rumours of the slave army quickly spread, and the insurgents' ranks grew. It wasn't just slaves who joined, but also scattered groups of free peasants and impoverished people who'd been displaced from their farms by the Roman elite and now earned their living as labourers, mowing hay or harvesting grapes. Just a few months after the flight from Capua, Spartacus's entourage already numbered thousands: men, women and children, a lot of whom were tasting freedom for the very first time. Many of the new peasant soldiers didn't even have weapons or shields, but wove shields out of branches, just as they were accustomed to "weaving branches into baskets that they used for their farm work", said the contemporary Roman historian, Sallust.

Spartacus himself led the training of this confluence of gladiators, slaves and other outcasts, passing on the knowledge he'd learned as a Thracian, Roman auxiliary and gladiator. Day by day, the ramshackle army transformed into a powerful force.

### SOLDIERS TRIED TO STARVE SLAVES

Spartacus and Crixus knew that it would happen one day, yet the sight still took them by surprise – in the distance, they glimpsed Roman legionaries marching towards their camp on Vesuvius. The sun glinted off breastplates, helmets and the silver eagles held high on the legions' standards. The Romans had turned up in their thousands.

To Spartacus's surprise, however, the Romans chose not to attack, but instead struck camp below the mountain. As they'd successfully done before, the generals had decided to starve out their enemy.

The strategy didn't scare Spartacus, however. As a Thracian, he'd grown up using guerrilla warfare; fighting in hilly terrain, attacks at night, lightning raids and ambushes formed the core of their tactics. Combined with the organisational

skills he'd acquired during his time in the Roman army, his Thracian expertise was hugely beneficial. Spartacus had studied the terrain and knew that only one road led up to the part of the mountain where his troops were stationed. The Romans outnumbered his own forces and had probably blocked the road.

Therefore, Spartacus ordered his people to gather the vines that grew on the rocks and twist them into long ropes. The slave army waited while the day drew to a close, and as darkness fell, they used the ropes to climb down the mountainside.

It was night by the time the rebels were again gathered at the foot of the mountain. Silently, they sneaked up to the legionaries' camp, where they threw themselves at the

unsuspecting sleeping soldiers with all their might, roaring furiously. Although there were more Romans than rebels, the attack caught them off-guard. The legionaries were used to being the attacking party; their strength lay in their tight battle formation. The Romans weren't prepared for chaotic hand-to-hand fighting against men who

were taller and stronger than themselves. Terrified, they fled, while their supplies, wagons, weapons and battle equipment were left behind for Spartacus's men.

### LOCALS HELPED THE SLAVES

During the summer of 73 BC, the gladiators rested and gathered their strength in southern Italy. Their victory over the Romans was intoxicating. Spartacus, however, was under no illusion. The gladiator, who knew the Romans and their army only too well, realised that his victory was a slap in the face for the empire's generals and elite, who were already suffering because of an uprising in Spain and a war in Asia Minor. Rome would refuse to be beaten by another slave revolt – the legions would return with even greater force.

Spartacus was right. The Romans soon sent several legions – led by the praetors Publius Varinius and Lucius Cossinius, among others – who set out to destroy the slave army. The empire took the threat from Spartacus seriously – and with good reason. Huge numbers of legionaries fell

after ambushes and battles around Mount Vesuvius. According to the historian Plutarch, Spartacus's men were close to capturing Cossinius himself while he took a bath in his camp; the praetor escaped, but died shortly after in battle.

After the victories, the enraged horde embarked upon a raid along the south-eastern coast of the Italian peninsula.

According to the Roman historian Florus, who wrote about the slave revolt around 150 years after the event, the rebel army "roved throughout all of Campania," spreading terror among southern Italy's slave owners. Most other locals, however welcomed the slaves. About 200 years earlier, Rome had subjugated Campania, and the Roman rulers were still unpopular there. The people of the region were therefore happy to help Spartacus.

### REBEL LEADERS QUARRELLED

After filling their stomachs and replenishing their supplies, Spartacus and his army changed direction again towards the north. Historians aren't sure why, but most likely the decision was a compromise between Spartacus and his co-leader, Crixus. Their departure from Mount Vesuvius hadn't pleased Crixus, who wanted to take advantage of the wave of success to beat the Romans once and for all. Spartacus, on the other hand, believed that the rebels should flee across the Alps to reach their homelands alive.

By all accounts, the disagreement was resolved by the decision to attack the praetor Varinius, but only after strengthening the slave army with new recruits. As one, the slaves moved to a region with large areas of grazing, where they

>>>>>

*Double-edged swords, spears, tridents, large nets, knives and axes armed the gladiators for battle.*



**Sicily** – the Romans' first overseas province – was ravaged by regular slave revolts, like the one in 135-132 BC.



# “The rebels attacked, but this time the legionaries fought back with all their might”

>>> recruited strong, healthy shepherds, who were used to surviving in a harsh landscape populated by bears and wolves.

The rebels wandered along paths trodden by mule caravans and herds of cattle. The route was too narrow for the Roman army with its armour and heavy equipment, but perfect for Spartacus and his guerrilla warriors, who deftly wended their way across the Picentini mountains in southern Italy. Snow powdered the slopes and bushes as the slave army crossed peaks that extended over 1,800 metres into the sky. Meanwhile, a fertile land revealed

itself: Lucania, with its vast fields and huge quantities of slaves.

Many of them joined

Spartacus, and in the spring of 72 BC, the slave army – which, according to the Greek historian Appian, now numbered 70,000 men – was ready to confront Varinius.

The bloody clash became one long humiliation for Varinius. Not only did Spartacus's forces overpower the Romans, but the rebels also confiscated their standards and *fascies* – a type of axe. Both symbolised Rome's power. “After this, people flocked in still greater numbers to join Spartacus,” said Appian, who lived from around AD 95 to 165. The growing army now captured the nearby city of Thurii, whose smithies were converted into weapons workshops. Soon the city resounded with the rhythmic blows of hammers, while the slaves' chains were transformed into swords, spears and

arrowheads. Meanwhile, men went into the surrounding countryside, where they captured wild horses. The brawny creatures could be very useful in combat.

## ROMANS BECAME GLADIATORS

As the slave army moved further north, the rebels split their force. Around two-thirds continued under Spartacus' command – the rest went with Crixus, who still wanted blood and who, according to Sallust, intended to march directly against the Roman legionaries.

Meanwhile, Rome was growing uneasy. The success of the slave army had convinced those in power that the rebels weren't just a bunch of misguided men, but a dangerous uprising that could be the empire's downfall. The authorities appointed two consuls who set out to crush the slave army once and for all. One, Lucius Gellius Publicola, tracked down Crixus's forces on Mount Gargano on the Adriatic coast. The rebels attacked, but this time the legionaries fought back with all their might and killed Crixus. The slaves attempted to escape, but most didn't get far before being slain by Roman weapons.

Meanwhile, Spartacus and his retinue were heading north. Somewhere in the northern part of the Apennine mountain range, which runs through central Italy, they were also overtaken by Roman legionaries.

The slave leader hastily equipped his army for battle, and in the





speech he gave to his troops, one word resounded again and again over the mountains and gorges: "Attack!"

Spartacus's onslaught of men caught the Romans by surprise. They'd expected to find an enemy cowed by the news of Crixus's defeat and death. The fighting spirit of the slave army, along with the waves of riders on horses, fearlessly steering straight into the ranks of men armed with spears and lances, caused the Roman soldiers to falter.

The slave army was outnumbered, yet once again it overpowered the Roman troops. Battle-dressed legionaries had to flee for their lives along the steep mountain roads, leaving behind cooking utensils, bags, baskets, spades, shovels, iron hooks, axes, saws, ladders and wheelbarrows, all of which the victorious slaves gathered up and transported to their camp, along with hundreds of prisoners of war.

And there Spartacus celebrated his greatest triumph since his escape from the gladiatorial school in Capua. With a bonfire as a symbolic centrepiece, he gave Crixus a hero's funeral. And in revenge for the torments of the past, 300 Roman prisoners of war were made to fight to the death like gladiators. In the glow of the bonfire, the faces of the previously oppressed novice gladiators shone with joy.

#### CRASSUS SCARED THE REBELS

Throughout the late summer and autumn of 72 BC, Spartacus and his guerrillas were buoyed up by their victory. Perhaps that's why, at the town of Mutina – present-day Modena – they turned around. Possibly, their success gave them the courage to confront the heart of the

#### SPAIN'S HANNIBAL REBELLED AGAINST THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Quintus Sertorius was one of Rome's most promising generals and politicians as proconsul in the province of Hispania. But in 79 BC, he turned against the empire's dictator, Sulla, and for seven years held out against Rome's best generals, until he was assassinated during a banquet. His revolt earned Sertorius the title "the new Hannibal" – an allusion to the military commander who cleverly defeated Rome in the Second Punic War.



Roman Empire; historians don't know for certain. At any rate, the 60,000 rebels moved south once more.

The sense of optimism continued until some disturbing news arrived at the slaves' camp. Spartacus's scouts reported that a new kind of Roman troop unit had been seen. Large numbers of legionaries were marching in perfect step, and their officers seemed to have eyes like a hawk. Rumours swirled about their commander-in-chief, Marcus Licinius Crassus – a determined and ruthless leader. His own soldiers were terrified of him. With Crassus at the helm, the Romans were a fearsome enemy.

As the gladiators felt the first cold of winter, an unfamiliar sense of unease crept into the camp. The slaves had marched for months and travelled nearly 2,000 kilometres on foot in all kinds of weather, driven by the struggle for freedom. They had won one great victory after another, and buried one of their two leaders. Sure, the insurgents had been triumphant so

far, but common sense told them that the Romans would not allow themselves to be beaten – and certainly not by an army of gladiators and slaves.

#### SPARTACUS WOULD CAPTURE SICILY

With Crassus's formidable troops in mind, Spartacus's men listened carefully as he detailed a new plan. The rebel leader would take his army to Sicily, start a rebellion, capture the island, and live there in freedom. The plan was not as unrealistic as it seems. Sicily was Rome's first overseas province and a major supplier of grain to the republic. And the island housed a large slave population, which had repeatedly rattled the Roman rulers with violent revolts. Encouraged, the slave army set off, and by the end of 72 BC, they'd arrived at the Strait of Messina – the narrow waters >>>

*Crixus's Germanic slave warriors attack the forces of consul Lucius Publicola. The battle ended in defeat and the death of Crixus.*





>> that separate Sicily from the Italian mainland.

The key to the rebels' freedom was the region's pirates – sailors who made a living from illegal slave trading and kidnapping prominent Romans. Spartacus came to an agreement with the pirates, who would ferry 2,000 of Spartacus's men across to Sicily, while the rest hid in the mountains. The vanguard would start an uprising, and the main force would follow when the revolt was in full swing. The dream of a free life beckoned – but it would never come true.

Either the pirates got cold feet, or – more likely – they were bribed by Sicily's Roman governor. Spartacus's troops stood on the beach ready to board, but the pirate ships never appeared. Desperate, the men tried to tie pieces of wood together using vines and animal skins, but in vain. The strait's violent currents grabbed the rafts and tangled them up together. The gateway to the promised island of Sicily was closed.

#### SLAVES WERE TRAPPED

Spartacus and his army went north again, but somewhere on the tip of the peninsula, where the headland was only around 56 km wide, the slaves hit a wall. Literally. In front of Spartacus, Crassus's soldiers stood behind a barrier of trenches and obstacles. Behind the rebel leader lay a cold, desolate winter landscape that offered no chance of providing food, and the Romans were prepared to wait until starvation forced the slaves to give up. Some of Spartacus's group did break through the wall on horses, but the success was short-lived. The Romans

## “When the fighting at the Silarius was over, thousands of slaves lay dead on the ground”

attacked the remaining men, and Spartacus had to return to help his comrades.

Neither fighting spirit nor weapons could get them through the barricade. Instead, the guerrillas' axes and other tools were put to use as they began to fill the trenches with wood, earth, animals and the corpses of fallen Romans. Eventually, one winter's day, the slave army was able to continue its journey. Spartacus considered his options, which proved to be few and far between. For a time, he planned to march towards Brundisium – a port city in south-east Italy – and from there sail to Greece. But he'd hardly set the troops in motion before he received bad news. The situation in Brundisium had changed. Proconsul Marcus Lucullus had just landed there with his troops after the war in Asia Minor.

Around the Silarius River in south-west Italy, a pale spring sun shone over the mountains, valleys and scattered olive groves. Spartacus could see where he was heading. He was trapped between two

Roman armies, and the only way to escape – dead or alive – was to attack Crassus.

Near the Roman camp, Spartacus gathered his people around him and asked them to bring him his horse. According to the Greek historian Plutarch, Spartacus told his soldiers “that if he won he would have many horses, and good ones, from the enemy, but if he lost, he would not need any”. Then Spartacus slaughtered his steed. The ritual attested to the fact that he wasn't a general who looked down on his men. He was a slave, like them. Just as they'd lived together, they would win or die together.

#### SPARTACUS DIED IN BATTLE

The two armies lined up to face each other, and Spartacus's gaze found Crassus among the legionaries. Enthroned on his horse, the commander looked fearsome. For a moment, the two men's eyes locked before Spartacus launched into battle. With his sword raised, he attacked Crassus, whose bodyguards tried to protect him. The



Saying that if he won he would get lots of good horses from the enemy, but if he lost, he wouldn't need any, Spartacus sacrificed his own steed in front of his slave army. Then the rebels set against the Roman legionaries in the decisive Battle of the Silarius River.



The slave army and the Roman legionaries clashed at the Silarius River in south-west Italy. During the battle, the Romans killed Spartacus – his body was never found.



furious gladiator wounded a group of Romans before the chaos carried him deeper into the battle. Shaken, the slaves saw Spartacus fall to the ground. The rebel army crumbled and the Romans took advantage of the situation. The legionaries hacked through the slave army, leaving the banks of the Silarius covered with corpses.

The survivors were unable to escape. Crassus's army captured 6,000 slaves. And Rome's revenge was brutal. The rebels were crucified and hung up at 40-metre intervals along the main road between Capua and Rome, the Via Appia. The path to freedom along which Spartacus had once led his comrades was now a path of death, filled with the sound of lamentations and later the stench of rotting bodies.

Along with his fallen men, Spartacus was thrown into an anonymous mass grave, while Crassus was rewarded with a triumph and a wreath of laurel leaves in Rome. ■

*This account is based on the writings of Sallust, Plutarch, Appian and a number of other ancient historians who reconstructed the rebellion.*

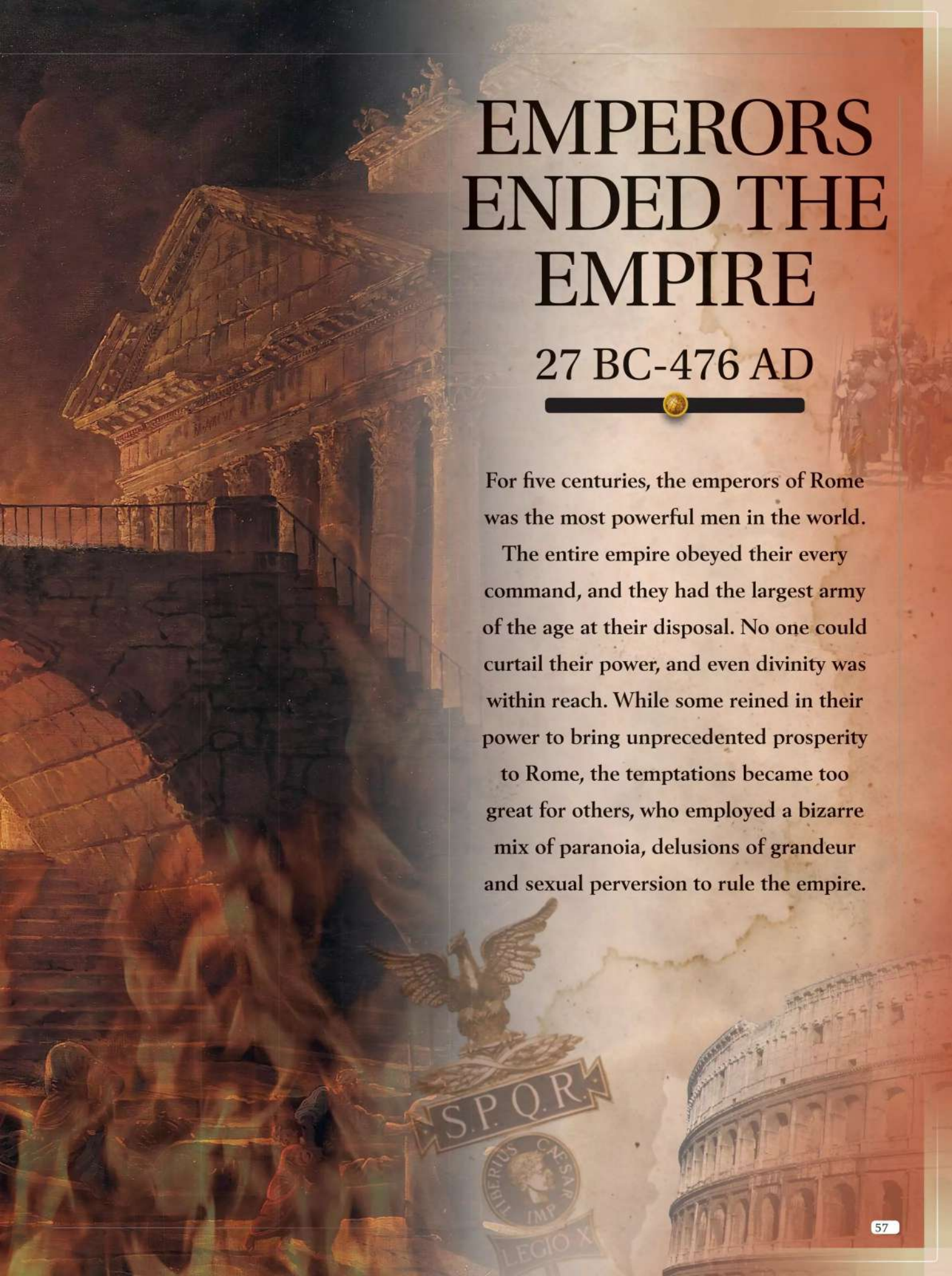
Crassus ordered the remnants of the slave army to be crucified along the road from Rome to Capua to act as a warning.











# EMPERORS ENDED THE EMPIRE

27 BC-476 AD

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For five centuries, the emperors of Rome was the most powerful men in the world.

The entire empire obeyed their every command, and they had the largest army of the age at their disposal. No one could curtail their power, and even divinity was within reach. While some reined in their power to bring unprecedented prosperity

to Rome, the temptations became too great for others, who employed a bizarre mix of paranoia, delusions of grandeur and sexual perversion to rule the empire.



## 27 BC-476 AD

**27 BC** Senators appoint Augustus the first emperor of Rome.

**AD 14** After 41 years on the throne, Augustus dies near Naples.

**64** Nero watches as large parts of Rome burn to the ground.

**96** The "Five Good Emperors" rule for 84 years. The empire flourishes.

**476** Rome's last emperor – Romulus Augustus – is deposed.



To all appearances, the decoration was a modest one. If Octavian's name had not been on the lips of all Romans, passers-by would barely have noticed the two laurel trees and shield that flanked the entrance to the general's house. It was 16th January 27 BC, and the small symbols marked one of the most important events in the history of the Roman Empire. The new adornment was an acknowledgement that the Senate had handed over complete control of the empire to Octavian – including supreme command of the Roman army and the right to overrule previously autonomous provincial governors.

Until now, the empire had been a republic with power distributed according to relatively democratic principles. Now Octavian had become Rome's first emperor with the title of Imperator Caesar Divi Filius Augustus. Posterity would come to know him as Augustus – The Illustrious One.

The new emperor himself preferred the title *Princeps* – First Among Equals – and humbly claimed that "I excelled all in influence, although I possessed no more official power than others".

In reality, during the Principate – the official title for the imperial era – Augustus was an autocratic dictator, but he kept his power well hidden. He had good reason to be modest. First, Augustus needed to avoid any comparisons with the detested despotic kings who had ruled Rome in its infancy.

Second – and more importantly – his humility stood in stark contrast to Julius Caesar, whose own attempt to usurp power twenty years previously had plunged the empire into a fierce civil war.

Caesar's death marked the start of a chaotic period during which a succession of generals tried to seize power. It wasn't until 31 BC, when Octavian defeated his greatest rival, Mark Antony, at the Battle of Actium, that peace was restored to Rome. By that time, the Romans had had their fill of civil war and rebellious army commanders, and the Senate therefore decided to place power in the hands of the newly christened Augustus.

**Caligula** was named after the Roman soldier's sandal, the *caliga*.

#### AUGUSTUS BROUGHT PEACE

Although it was clear to most that Rome had long since moved beyond the republican form of government and

required the leadership of a strong ruler, no one said it out loud – least of all Emperor Augustus. Instead, he made sure he gave the impression that he wasn't acting alone or for personal gain. He gathered a group of men with whom he nominally shared power. At the same time, he initiated large building works and erected public baths and theatres for Rome's citizens to use.

After expanding the empire considerably, the new emperor brought peace to the provinces, while at home calm was restored. In 17 BC, Rome – with Augustus at the helm – celebrated its 800th anniversary in triumph. The days of tyranny were over, and the Romans loved



their emperor. Augustus himself did something quite unheard of when, in the final years of his life, he wrote his memoir, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (The Deeds of the Divine Augustus). According to the emperor's own account, his four decades of rule saw him dedicate temples, donate money for public use, give people huge gladiatorial games, and provide his soldiers with both money and land.

During a trip to the city of Nola near Naples in AD 14, the emperor fell ill and died. While Augustus had established the principate and demonstrated its strength, it was now up to his successors to defend and develop it further. There is no doubt among historians that the Augustan period was one of the most prosperous in the Roman Empire. The problem was that those following the first emperor found it difficult to fill Augustus's shoes.

#### STEPSON INHERITED THE EMPIRE

On paper, Augustus's successor – his stepson Tiberius – was the ideal emperor. Not only had he commanded more armies and governed more provinces than anyone else, but Augustus had shared power with

#### VICTORY AT ACTIUM SECURED OCTAVIAN POWER

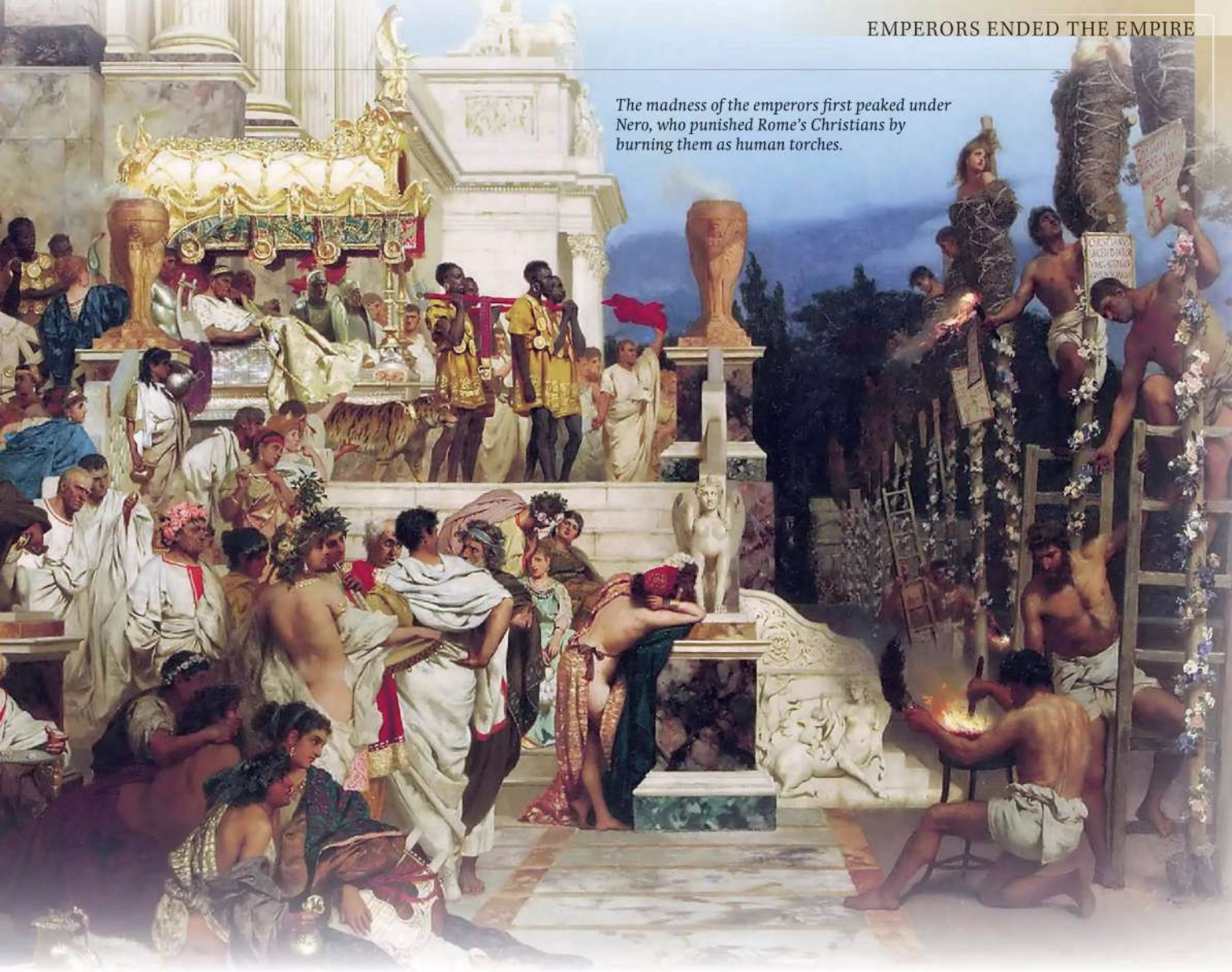
On 2nd September 31 BC, a fleet under the command of the Roman general Octavian clashed with forces of his rival Mark Antony near Actium, in present-day Greece. A fierce naval battle followed, which

Octavian won. This opened the path to power over the Roman Empire. Four years later, Octavian was hailed as Rome's first emperor, taking the name Augustus. The move ended five centuries of republican rule.



#### CRITICAL MOMENTS





The madness of the emperors first peaked under Nero, who punished Rome's Christians by burning them as human torches.

“He [Tiberius] barely allowed the ceremony to end before hurrying the boy and his flute-playing brother off, and abusing them.”

his stepson, who therefore had first-hand knowledge of how to control the huge empire. No one was more qualified than Tiberius to become Rome's second emperor, and the Romans were looking forward to a peaceful future under his rule. They were to be horribly disappointed.

Tiberius possessed neither the old emperor's co-operative disposition nor his humility, and instead began to exterminate his enemies in his obsessive need to hang on to power. His main weapon became the *lex maiestatis* (law of treason), which made high treason punishable by death. The law's application quickly became grotesque, as Romans discovered that any accusation leading to a conviction secured them a right to a portion of the condemned man's property. Romans accused each other in their thousands, and death sentences flowed

from the courts. After 14 years, Tiberius retired to the island of Capri, where he surrounded himself with slaves, astrologers and lovers.

Historian Suetonius claimed Tiberius was obsessed with having sex with people of all ages and of either gender. He arranged orgies and refused to take no for an answer once he'd picked out a partner:

“There's a story too, that drawn to the incense-bearer's beauty at a sacrifice, and unable to contain himself, he [Tiberius] barely allowed the ceremony to end before hurrying the boy and his flute-playing brother off, and abusing them both. When they protested at the rape, Tiberius had their legs broken.”

The two had a lucky escape – the prickly emperor had a habit of throwing anyone who displeased him – whether lover,

mistress or simply someone giving offence – over Capri's sheer cliffs.

#### CALIGULA SPOKE TO STATUES

Tiberius and Augustus perfectly illustrated the imperial era's contradictory nature. On the one hand, it possessed skilled emperors who brought peace and prosperity to Rome; on the other, it had more than its fair share of insane or incompetent rulers who left the empire in chaos.

Tiberius himself believed that the title of emperor made him so powerful that he was “beyond good and evil”. That attitude was passed on with great success to his great-nephew Caligula, who spent his late adolescence in Tiberius's house in Capri before succeeding him. As a boy, he spent time drilling with the army, like his father Germanicus, which earned him the nickname Caligula – “little [soldier's] boot”. But the name soon lost its endearing quality once Caligula became emperor, when it quickly became synonymous with violence and perversion of the worst order.

“So much for the Emperor: it remains now to speak of the Monster,” stated the historian Suetonius in his biography *The* >>>>>



# “It’s true that Caligula was one of Rome’s most insane emperors.”

*Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, written in AD 121.

And it’s true that Caligula was one of Rome’s most insane emperors. Passers-by saw him deep in conversation with statues of the god Jupiter, and the emperor announced he would make his favourite horse, Incitatus, a consul, while frequently inviting him to dinner – a traditional Roman way of demonstrating status. When Caligula’s attempt to invade Britain foundered, he reportedly deployed his troops to collect seashells as a symbol of the emperor’s victory over the sea god Neptune.

## CHRISTIANS WERE SCAPEGOATS

One day in January 41, an officer from the Praetorian Guard was sent to end his Caligula’s reign. He struck in a dark passageway beneath the imperial palaces on Palatine Hill, killing the mad emperor.

Caligula’s death, however, did not spare the Romans from unstable emperors in the future. Although imperial power wasn’t

formally passed down, it had been inherited by members of the emperor’s family since Tiberius’s time. What mattered here, however, wasn’t familial ties,

but the ability to manipulate. The art was perfected by Agrippina, mother of Emperor Nero. By poisoning her husband Claudius, who succeeded Caligula, she obtained the title of emperor for her son.

After about five years, Nero turned on his mother. He tried to have her murdered by sabotaging her sailboat, but Agrippina was an accomplished swimmer and survived. When she came ashore, however, Nero had her accused of a murder that he’d committed and sentenced her to death. Later, he executed his wife so he could marry his mistress.

Nero showed no interest in Rome’s welfare. He noted laconically that his position gave him the power to do what he liked – and he used it to challenge Roman society’s centuries-old, unwritten rules of conduct. The new emperor appeared in public as a singer, guitarist, and charioteer, and when a fierce fire ravaged the city, did nothing to tackle it. Instead, rumours circulated that Nero had himself instigated the fire and that the emperor – even as the flames devoured Rome – watched on as he sang a sad song about the fall of Troy.

Historians don’t know whether the story is true or not, but Nero took the rumours seriously enough to immediately seek out a scapegoat. His eye fell on the Christians, then a small, insignificant sect. According to Tacitus, Nero “inflicted the most exquisite tortures on” this religious minority, who were “wrapped in the skins

## THE GOOD AND THE BAD

*In the Roman Empire, its citizens’ well-being was entirely dependent on the abilities and whims of the autocratic emperor. Each emperor exercised power in their own unique way. Some used Rome’s enormous wealth for the common good and showed restraint. Others raged and murdered in cold blood to remove their enemies, gain more power, or just because they could.*

### AUGUSTUS 27 BC-14 AD

■ Rome’s first emperor expanded the empire in Africa, secured control of Hispania (Spain) and ushered in the Pax Romana – a 200-year period of relative peace. Augustus also created an impressive road network and set up Rome’s first police and fire brigade. After his death, the Senate elevated the emperor to a god.



**CALIGULA**  
AD 37-41

■ Caligula was definitely the most brutal emperor in Roman history. He regularly raped female guests at his dinner parties and considered himself a living god. At the same time, he suffered from paranoia – a trait that cost thousands of innocents their lives.



of wild beasts and torn [apart] by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or [engulfed] in flames, and ... burned to light up the night".

Persecuting Christians proved insufficient to appease the empire. In 66 a revolt broke out in Judea. Two years later, the governor of one of the Gallic provinces declared his loyalty to Rome, but not Nero. Others soon followed, and the following year Nero committed suicide after being deposed by disgruntled senators.

#### VESPASIAN BROUGHT PEACE TO ROME

After the death of Nero, and a brief civil war that saw four emperors come and go in a single year (AD 69), Rome entered a quieter period. Several capable emperors followed, restoring popular support for the office. Vespasian and his son Titus returned to the ancient Roman virtues that Augustus had championed, winning back widespread popularity through peace, prosperity and the construction of new public buildings, including the spectacular Colosseum amphitheatre, which was inaugurated under Titus in the AD 80. Suetonius wrote that Titus "possessed such an aptitude, by nature, nurture, or good fortune, for winning affection that he was loved and adored by all the world as Emperor."

Vespasian's Flavian dynasty was short-lived, but was followed by a period of "Five Good Emperors" where peace reigned. Meanwhile, the empire continued to grow and reached its widest extent under the popular Trajan (98-117).

This contrast between good and bad extended beyond an emperor's administration, manifesting itself in his way of life. While the modest Augustus had lived in a private house on the Palatine Hill, other emperors built lavish palaces for themselves. While many emperors overindulged with frequent orgies,

Augustus – according to Suetonius – "was frugal and, as a rule, preferred the food of the common people, especially the coarser sort of bread, small fishes, fresh hand-pressed cheese, and green figs of the second crop". In a similar vein, Vespasian drank only a small glass of water before the traditional morning salutation, while Marcus Aurelius (161-180) reportedly ate very little. The most ascetic emperors went as far as to dismiss the imperial chefs on taking office.

In stark contrast stood those emperors who embraced gluttony. Both Nero and Claudius were known for their excess, but Caligula led the way. According to Suetonius, he would "serve up unnatural feasts, with gold used in preparing the bread and meat, asserting that one should either be frugal or be Caesar", while the barbarian emperor Maximinus Thrax (235-238) was reportedly able to consume up to 27 kg of meat and 21 litres of wine a day.

The worst, however, was Vitellius – a transitional figure between Nero and Vespasian. He ruled for only eight months, but quickly acquired a habit of inviting himself to three or four banquets a day, at his hosts' expense. Some were nearly eaten out of house and home – including the food placed on the household's sacrificial altar: "Vitellius could never restrain himself from stealing the altar cakes and meats, at a sacrifice, out of the very flames themselves,

and devouring them on the spot," wrote Suetonius in his biography.

It's worth noting, however, that those emperors portrayed positively by ancient Roman historians often paid the authors princely sums to write favourably about them. Therefore, many stories must be taken with a pinch of salt.

#### BANQUETS WERE COSMOPOLITAN

Exaggerated or not, there's no doubt that several emperors lived lives of immense gluttony with daily *convivia* (banquets) comprising foods from across the known world. Rome's rulers imported delicious mushrooms from India, rams from southern Italy, pigs from Gaul, and *garum* (fermented fish sauce) from Spain. For dessert, slaves >>>



In AD 64, a fierce fire broke out in Rome. According to legend, Nero let the fire eat away at the city while he sang songs about the fall of Troy.

147

emperors ruled the Roman Empire before it was divided into two in AD 395.



**NERO**  
54-68

■ Rome's fifth emperor was helped to power as a 17-year-old when his mother reportedly poisoned the sitting emperor, Claudius. Nero followed in his mother's footsteps and murdered both her and his wife. Legend tells that Nero was behind the great fire that ravaged Rome in 64 – reportedly using it as a pretext to make room for new palaces.

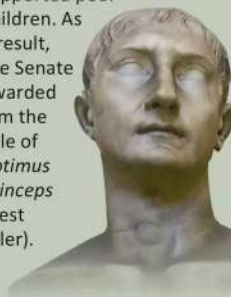
**VESPASIAN**  
69-79

■ Historians know little about Vespasian, who took part in the invasion of Britain in 43. He was nevertheless a unifying figure who managed to restore the empire after the previous destructive regimes. Like Augustus, he brought prosperity and embarked on major building projects in Rome, including the Colosseum. By the time Vespasian died, confidence in the empire had been restored.



**TRAJAN**  
98-117

■ Trajan led the army in a series of successful campaigns, and the empire reached its greatest extent during his reign. At the same time, he introduced the *alimenta* welfare scheme, which supported poor children. As a result, the Senate awarded him the title of *optimus princeps* (best ruler).



**COMMODUS**  
180-192

■ One of Rome's worst emperors had a reputation for suffering from delusions of grandeur. He believed he was the reincarnation of Hercules and demanded, among other things, that Rome should be renamed after him.







Gladiatorial battles became increasingly brutal during the imperial period. One punishment saw the condemned tied to the back of a bull, which caused fatal internal injuries.



The most ascetic emperors – including Vespasian and Augustus – lived spartan lives. In contrast, the most decadent rulers indulged in unimaginable orgies.

>>> served fruit and sweets made from honey before the *commissatio* (drinking party) began. At this point, the women were removed from the emperor's presence, and he was given the opportunity to discuss politics and demonstrate his abilities to the elite. A poor performance could, at worst, cost the emperor his life.

Yet, after two hundred years of imperial rule and a long line of eccentricity, no emperor had destroyed Rome's position as a world power. But Germanic tribes were now threatening the empire's borders to the

north, and the army needed modernising. Its organisation, strategy and tactics hadn't changed for over a century. When the Romans went to war with the Persians in 163, it followed a plan devised by Julius Caesar in 44 BC. Skirmishes with the northern tribes became almost constant, because the Germanic peoples no longer fell for the Roman's predictable ploys.

#### COMMODUS BECAME A GLADIATOR

Renewing the military wasn't at the top of Commodus's agenda when he began ruling alone in 180. From the start of his reign he suffered from delusions of grandeur. He saw himself as Hercules reincarnated and set about naming cities, institutions, military units and even the Senate after himself. He even proposed renaming Rome as *Colonia Lucia Annia Commodiana* (Immortal Blessed Inhabited Colony of the Earth). His great passion was fighting as a gladiator – unheard of for an emperor, as gladiators were among the lowest strata of society.

Commodus, however, embraced this role with great fervour. In 192 he entered the arena in front of an incredulous assembly of senators, consuls, slaves, and ordinary Romans. Commodus, who'd boasted that he wanted to fight wild animals, began by beheading an ostrich. His arms outstretched, he waved triumphantly with the ostrich's head in one hand and the

sword in the other. The sight was so ridiculous that the senator and historian Cassius Dio, sitting in the stands, had to stuff his laurel wreath into his mouth to prevent himself from laughing.

Not everyone had something to laugh about that afternoon. In one of the twelve scenes that Commodus played to his audience, he dressed as a god battling mythological monsters. They were portrayed by the physically handicapped who'd been undressed and dragged into the arena to be slaughtered by their vainglorious emperor.

Commodus was so excited after his appearance that he declared he'd begin the next year of his reign – on 1st January 193 – not in his palace dressed in the customary royal purple, but in the arena as a gladiator. Before he was able to cast aside imperial

tradition, however, Commodus was poisoned by his mistress. Rome breathed a sigh of relief and moved to erase all traces of the hated emperor. For a long time, the city streets resounded with the scraping sound of chisel on stone as craftsmen painstakingly removed the name Commodus from all buildings.

#### THE REIGN OF THE LAST EMPEROR

Commodus marked the beginning of the end of the Roman Empire. In the century that followed, it became increasingly clear that Rome had become a patchwork of different cultures and religions. A new

#### EYEWITNESSES

Tacitus:

#### ROME BURNED, AD 64



“Now started the most terrible and destructive fire which Rome has ever experienced... Some who had lost everything – even their food for the day – could have escaped but preferred to die...”

Nobody dared fight the flames. Attempts to do so were prevented by menacing gangs. Torches, too, were openly thrown in, by men crying that they acted under orders... Of Rome's fourteen districts only four remained intact.”





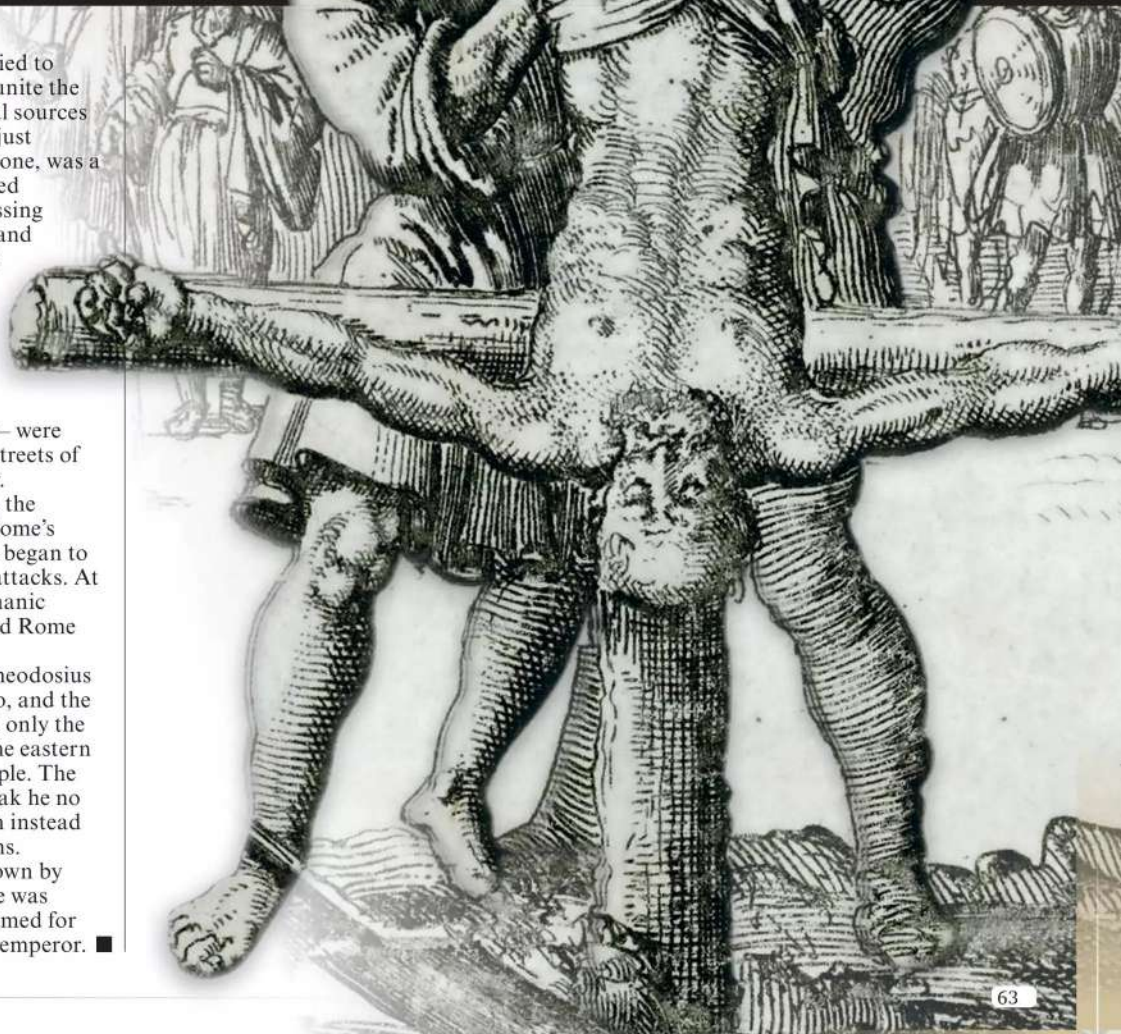
The apostle Saint Peter was crucified in Rome around AD 67. The Roman conflict with Christians lasted for centuries.

emperor, Elagabalus (218-222), tried to introduce a new god who would unite the fragmented empire. But historical sources suggested the emperor, who was just fourteen when he came to the throne, was a transvestite. He reportedly enjoyed dressing in women's clothing, passing himself off as the wife of a man, and prostituting himself. His greatest crime, though, was to marry one of Rome's Vestal Virgins. This proved too much for Roman citizens to bear, and both Elagabalus and his mother – who many believed to be as powerful as the emperor himself – were murdered, dragged through the streets of Rome, and thrown into the Tiber.

In 224, a new Persian dynasty, the Sasanian Empire, appeared on Rome's eastern borders. Soon, provinces began to suffer from repeated and brutal attacks. At the same time, the growing Germanic warrior tribes increasingly battled Rome along the Rhine and Danube.

After the death of Emperor Theodosius in 395, the empire was split in two, and the emperor in Rome now controlled only the Western Roman Empire, while the eastern half was ruled from Constantinople. The emperor's position became so weak he no longer held any real power, which instead resided with various army factions.

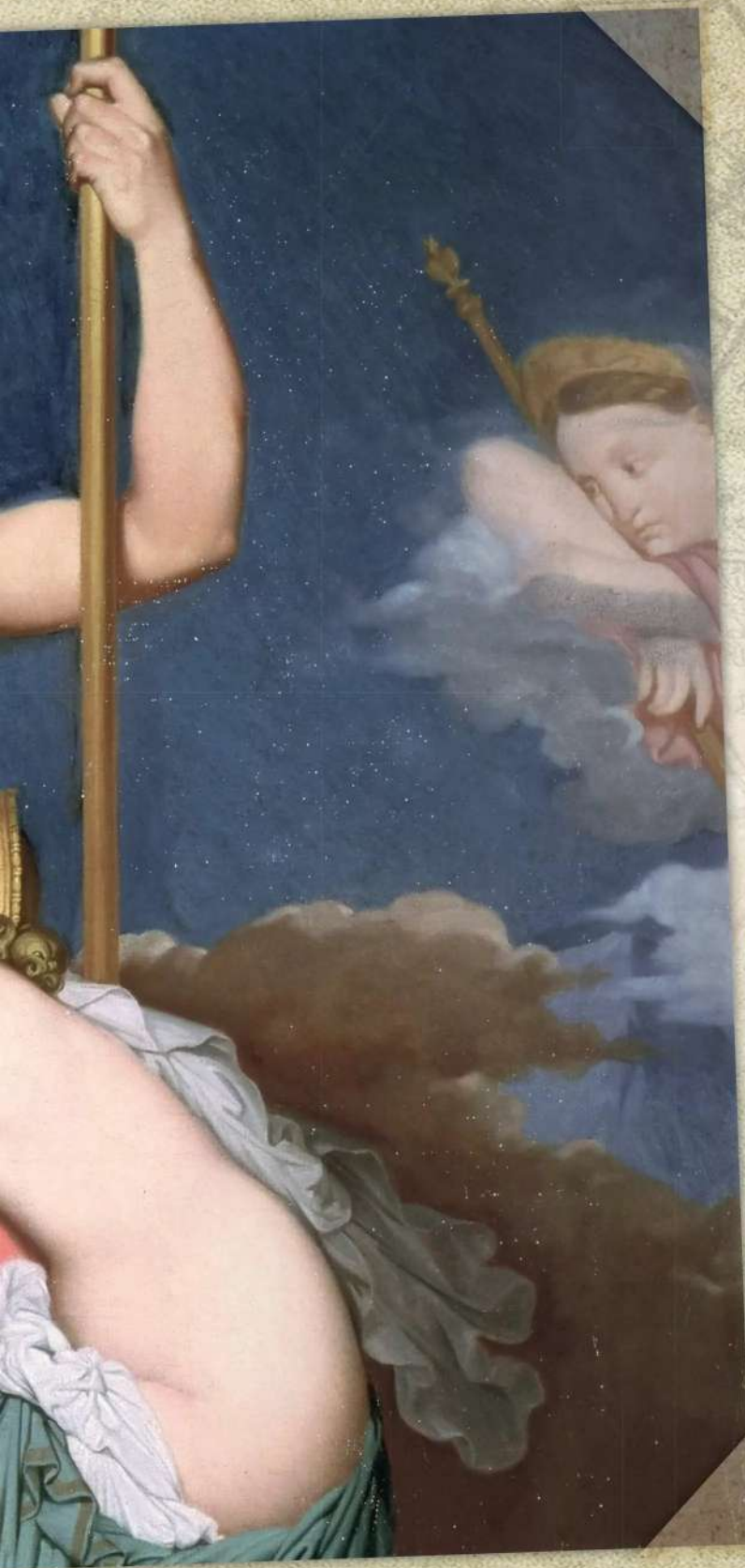
The last emperor was overthrown by Germanic tribes in 476. His name was symbolic: Romulus Augustus, named for the founder of Rome and its first emperor. ■











# THE ROMAN GODS



The early Romans shamelessly stole from the Greek's world of gods and had a god for every occasion. The most important of was the god of war, Jupiter. Roman legions made sacrifices to Jupiter before going into battle, and offered him a share of their spoils when they returned home. When Christianity emerged in the first century, it was initially considered to be just one of many strange, new cults, but it later became the state religion of the faltering empire.



**Vestals:** The temple of the goddess of the home, Vesta, was raised in the centre of Rome. Here, six virgins – known as the Vestals or Vestal Virgins – guarded the city's sacred fire, which was never allowed to go out. The temple was a meeting place where the citizens of Rome could, for example, light fires in order to cook..



**Jupiter:** The Romans gave the king of the gods, Jupiter, the nickname Optimus Maximus (the best and the greatest). As well as war, he ruled the sky, thunder and lightning.



**Capital temples:** Throughout the empire, temples were erected in honour of the gods. The Sbeitla Temple in the province of Africa honoured Jupiter, Juno and Minerva.





**The Capitoline Triad:** The Romans gathered the three most important gods, Jupiter, his wife, Juno, and his daughter, Minerva, in what was known as The Capitoline Triad. Each played major roles in war, trade and the home.



**Apollo:** Jupiter's son, Apollo, was the god of the sun and poetry, and the only Greek god to retain his name and identity. Emperor Augustus selected him as his patron god.

## THE ROMAN'S FIRST GODS

■ The early Romans re-purposed the Greek gods. The king of the gods, Zeus, was renamed Jupiter. Similarly, the goddess of love, Aphrodite, became Venus, and the god of wine, Dionysus, was dubbed Bacchus. Every citizen had to make sacrifices to the gods of Rome, but the state also permitted other gods and foreign cults.



**Aesculapius' staff:** The Romans began worshipping the Greek god of physicians, Aesculapius, after a plague hit Rome in 292 BC. The snake that winds around the staff is still a symbol of medicine today.



**COPIED GODS** Jupiter was a faithful copy of Zeus. He ensured Rome's military power and sovereignty.

Juno, Jupiter's spouse, was the Roman counterpart to Hera, Zeus' wife.

The Romans also worshiped Mars, god of war, whereas the Greeks' god of war was Ares.



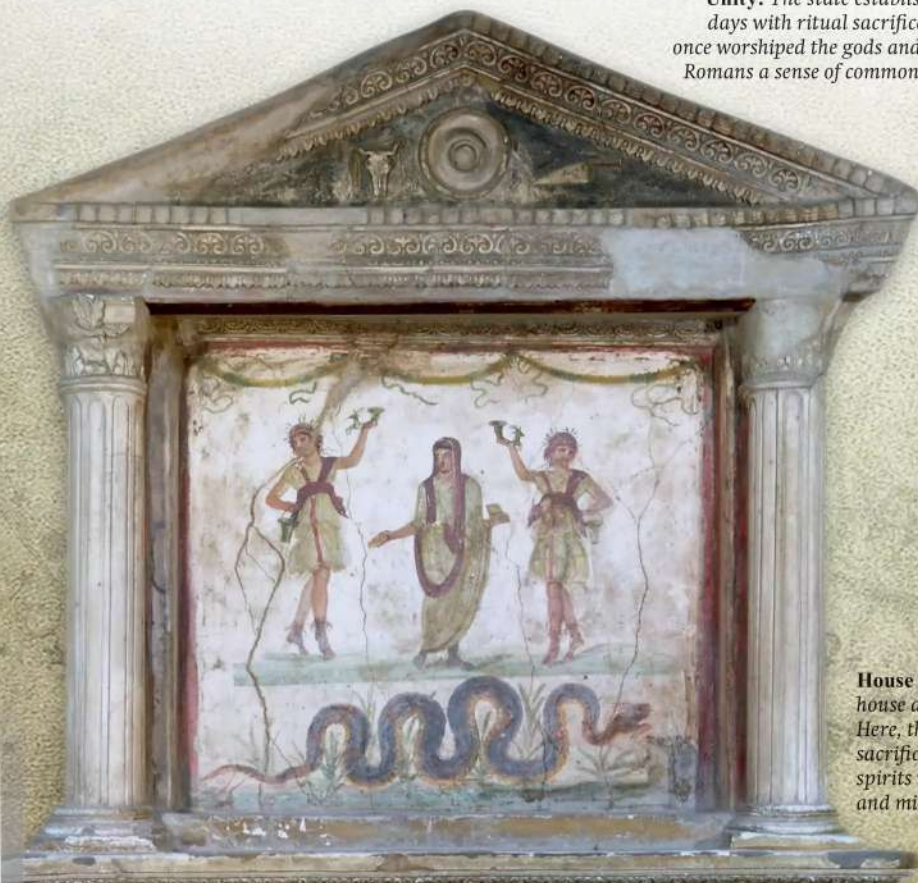
**Animal sacrifices:** At public sacrifices, the Romans slaughtered pigs, sheep, and oxen. Ordinary Romans, however, had to resort to less expensive animals such as hens or kid goats. It was a bad omen if the animal ran from the altar.



**Unity:** The state established feast days with ritual sacrifices that at once worshiped the gods and gave the Romans a sense of common identity.



**House altars:** Roman homes had house altars known as a larariums. Here, the whole family made daily sacrifices to the gods and house spirits with spiced cakes, wine and milk.







**Imperial Cult:** After the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, the Roman state exalted him to a god. From 27 BC, it became customary to exalt emperors to gods, usually after their death, although Augustus became a living god.



**Mercury:** The lightning-fast god of commerce, Mercury, was worshiped in the Circus Maximus, which was both a trading centre and a racetrack.

## RITUALS

■ Roman religion was a jumble of rituals. Everything, from ox sacrifices to castration, was used to win the favour of the gods. At the same time, the priests jealously guarded the smallest details of the sacrifices and gladly repeated a ritual up to 30 times if they thought they had forgotten something along the way.



**Clamps:** Historians believe that the most devoted followers of the cult of Cybele used clamps when they castrated themselves.



**CULTURE** Male soldiers and slaves met in underground temples to slay and consume bulls in sacrifices to the god Mithras.



Women, in turn, worshiped the influential Egyptian goddess Isis.

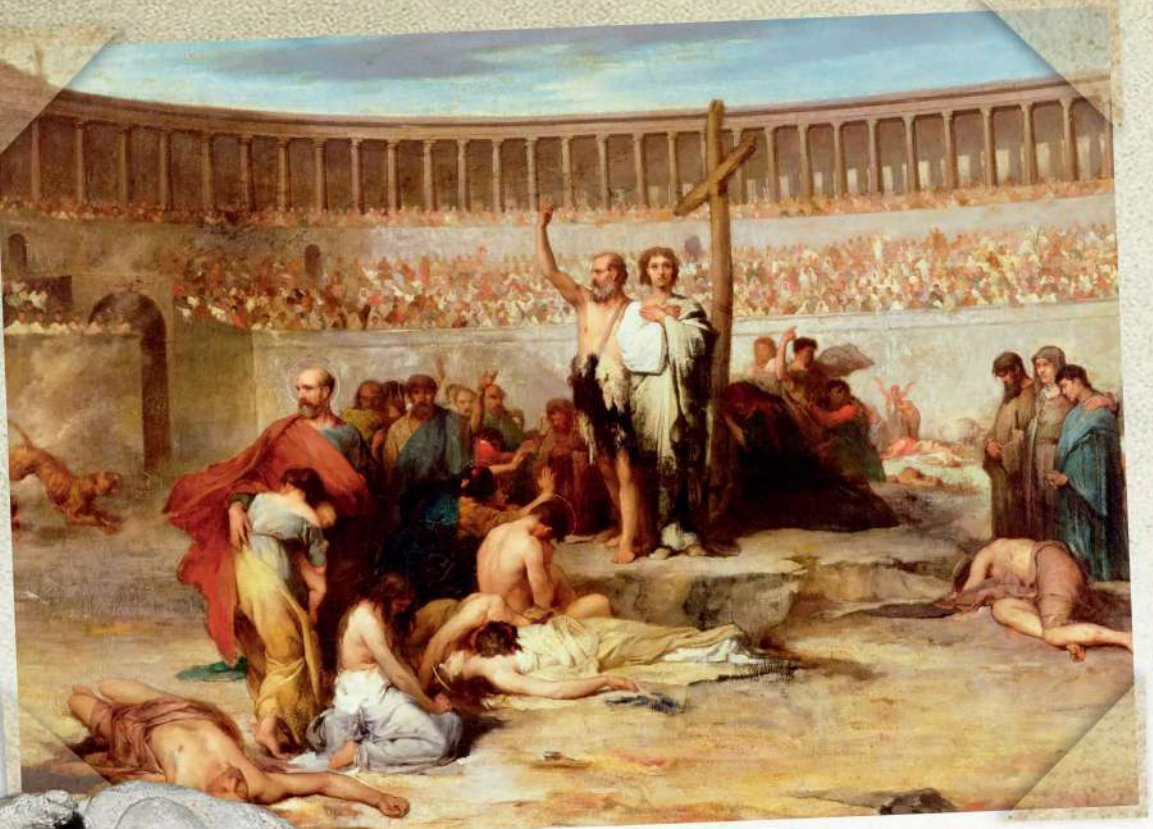


Devotees of the god Bacchus honoured him by hosting drunken orgies known as the Bacchanalia.



**Christian persecution:**

For nearly 400 years, the Romans considered Christians to be gentiles (not Roman citizens). They were tortured without mercy and ended their days by being thrown to the lions, burned as living torches or covered with animal skins and torn to pieces by dogs.



**Jesus Christ:** When the empire was attacked by hordes from the north and east, Christ became a unifying symbol for the empire.

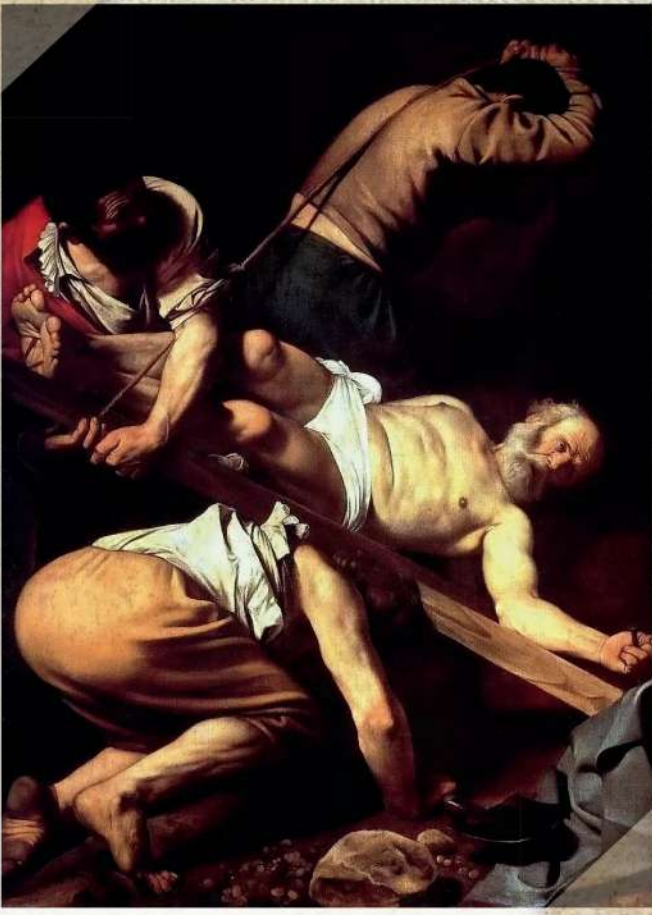


**MILESTONES** Emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305) persecuted the Christians with unprecedented brutality and had all Bible manuscripts burned.

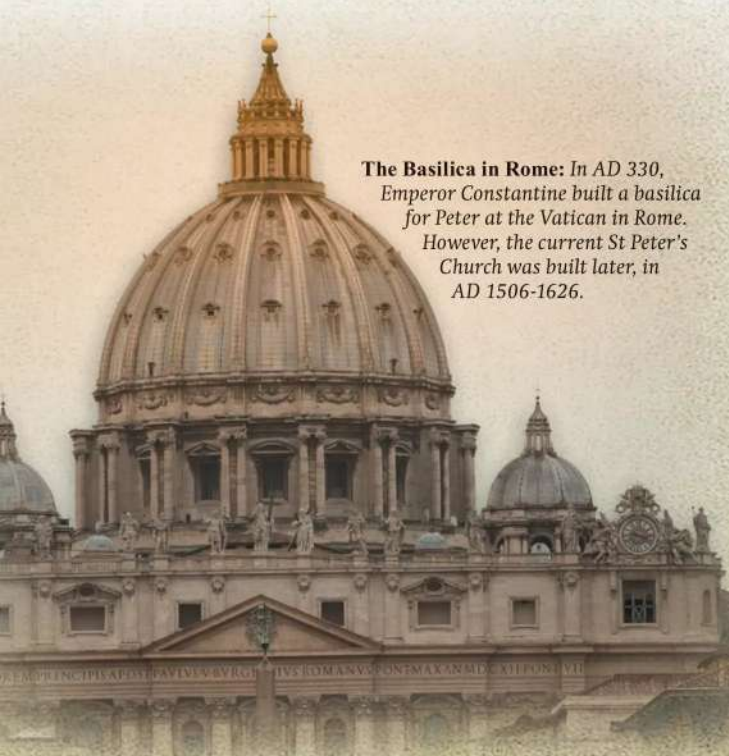
Constantine saw a cross in a vision and granted religious freedom in AD 313.

Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the state religion in AD 380.





**Martyrdom:** The first Christian leader in Rome, Saint Peter, suffered a cruel death when Emperor Nero allegedly had him crucified with his fellow believers after the fire of Rome in AD 64. It is said that Peter was crucified with his head down because he did not want to imitate his teacher, Christ.



**The Basilica in Rome:** In AD 330, Emperor Constantine built a basilica for Peter at the Vatican in Rome. However, the current St Peter's Church was built later, in AD 1506-1626.

## CHRISTIANITY

■ A few years after the crucifixion of Christ, the first Christians reached Rome and began to preach their new faith. Their message of one almighty god quickly became a threat to the divinity of the emperors. Even after Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire in AD 380, many continued to believe that the old rituals could secure the favour of the gods.



**The Chi Rho symbol:** The Chi Rho symbol was composed of the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ: X and P.



**Non-Christian rituals:** For many years, the Roman's traditional rituals continued side by side with Christianity. Many Romans celebrated the pagan festival of Lupercalia until AD 495, when the pope banned it.







A detailed illustration of a Roman soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet, a red cloak, and a sword. He is standing in front of a stone building with a tiled roof. The background is a warm, orange-toned landscape with a faint image of the Colosseum in the bottom right corner.

# LIFE IN THE PROVINCES

210 BC-AD 300

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From the Black Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Roman Empire once stretched over millions of square kilometres and encompassed a multitude of peoples. To secure control of the vast empire, the Romans divided conquered lands into provinces that flourished under the new rule.

Undeveloped areas were given roads and aqueducts, and Latin could be heard throughout Europe. A steady stream of recruits joined Rome's growing armies, lured by the prospect of gaining coveted Roman citizenship.

S.P.Q.R.

TIBERTUS CAESAR  
IMP

LEGIO X



# 210 BC-AD 300

**210 BC** Sicily becomes the first province of the Roman Republic.

**31 BC** Emperor Augustus conquers Egypt, which he keeps as his private property.



**c AD 117** Under Emperor Trajan, the empire reaches its greatest size: 6.5 million km<sup>2</sup>.

**c AD 300** Rome's enemies test the empire's borders.

**W**hen Emperor Claudius' forces arrived to conquer Britannia – modern-day England and Wales – in AD 43, the Britons fought fiercely to defend their independence. But the Romans soon crushed their army and then set about winning the peace.

Just 40 years later, around AD 80, their victory seemed complete. As the Roman historian Tacitus observed at the time, the British "were gradually led into the demoralising vices of porticoes, baths and grand dinner parties. The naïve Britons described these things as 'civilisation', when in fact they were simply part of their enslavement."

The description applied to more than just Britannia, though. Despite being subject to the will of Rome, life and the economy flourished markedly in many provinces under Roman rule. The locals benefited from the Romans' ability to create highly developed cities, where thousands of cubic metres of fresh water flowed in daily through mighty aqueducts, and the sudden opportunity to sell local goods to distant parts of the empire made the local elite richer than ever. Relatively benign laws and a well-developed system of administration ensured peace and order.

Consequently, for most inhabitants of the Roman Empire, life during the *pax romana* – Roman peace – was better and more stable than what had come before.

The spread of the Roman provinces took place at an impressive rate after Sicily

became Rome's first province in 210 BC. As early as AD 100, the Romans had established more than 30 provinces.

## MILITARY BUILT ROADS

At the empire's height between 50 and 100 million people lived in the Roman-occupied territories. Rome's provinces housed huge populations with vastly different languages, cultures and ways of life. In the eastern provinces and North Africa, highly developed urban communities existed even

**The Gauls'** large moustaches amazed the Romans, who thought that food would get stuck in them on the way to their mouths.

before the Romans arrived, which provided a foundation upon which the newcomers could build. In comparison, urban development in Western Europe, especially in the Alps, Britannia and Gaul, was rudimentary at best, with transport still taking place on rutted tracks. This changed with the Romans, who built

roads soon after conquering a land. The purpose was primarily to ensure that the legions could quickly travel where they were needed, and therefore the roads were solidly built with the best materials the legion's builders could find in the area, including limestone mortar, gravel, flint or iron slag.

Roman engineers worked methodically. Where possible, roads were built in straight lines and always along the shortest distance from A to B, with A and B being carefully selected according to their strategic importance. In Britannia, for example, the first roads connected the trading city of London – or Londinium as the Romans called it – with the Romans' landing ports



The remains of a Roman amphitheatre still adorn the ruins of the ancient Nabataean city of Petra in southern Jordan

at Chichester and Richborough, which housed the legions' headquarters. Later, the road network was expanded so that eventually it reached forts along Hadrian's Wall. A number of smaller roads were also added to assist with trade, including roads to iron mines in the Weald in the south-east of Britannia. Where necessary, roads were supported by bridges and viaducts in characteristic Roman style.

After the legions' engineers had laid the roads, Roman road officials, *curatores viarum*, took over the responsibility of ensuring that the network remained in good condition. The cost of maintenance was probably charged to the local urban community, the *civitas*.

## CITIES WERE BUILT IN ROME'S IMAGE

The Romans prioritised the construction of cities – and considered them to be the heart and mark of a civilised society. These sentiments can be sensed in the writings of the author Pausanias who, described Panopeus in Greece as "a city of the Phocians, if one can give the name of city to those who possess no government offices, no gymnasium, no theatre, no market-place [and] no water descending to a fountain".

The Romans' goal was to turn primitive provincial towns into lively commercial centres in the imperial style. The newly fashioned hubs provided accommodation for Roman officials, trade depots and the key institutions of civilisation: bath houses, public squares and amphitheatres.

In many places, the Romans built their cities from scratch, locating them according to strategic considerations. For example, Vienna and Cologne were originally camps for Roman legions stationed along the Danube and Rhine border rivers.

Other cities sprang up because they were ideally situated for trade. That's probably how London came to be. The city was founded at a point where the Thames was narrow enough for the Romans to build a bridge across it, but deep enough to accept seagoing vessels. Archaeologists have found traces of a large Roman quay at the present site of London Bridge.

The many new cities were laid out in a Roman pattern with straight streets laid

## SICILY BECAME A PROVINCE

**I**n 210 BC, Sicily became Rome's first province. The change had been preceded by 52 years of strife over the fertile and strategically important island that was initially divided between Greek colonists and the North

African superpower Carthage. Only after several wars were the Romans able to annex the island, which served as Rome's granary for the next 700 years. Sicily was soon joined by more Roman provinces.



## DECISIVE MOMENTS



# ROMAN PROVINCES



From 210 BC onwards, the Romans conquered vast territories that were converted into new provinces. The purpose was to secure Rome's borders, access vital raw materials and provide new sources of tax to keep the empire running. Some provinces helped make the Roman Empire the world's leading superpower, while others caused so much trouble that they became an economic burden.


After 25 years in the army, provincial soldiers obtained a diploma in Roman citizenship.



## BRITANNIA

### ■ Roman from AD 43

The most northern province exported grain and agricultural goods to Roman legions on the Rhine. The Romans developed British mining in the Dolaucothi gold mines in Wales and elsewhere in the province, but Britannia was never a great business – there were too many revolts.

 Roman Empire

## GERMANIA

### ■ Roman from the end of the 1st century AD

If Emperor Augustus had had his way, most of present-day Germany would have been a Roman province named Germania Magna (Greater Germany). That dream was shattered by local tribes in AD 9, when they held off the Romans in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. Instead, the Romans had to settle for two small provinces: Germania Superior and Germania Inferior. Both were under constant threat of invasion by surrounding tribes throughout the life of the empire.

BRITANNIA

GERMANIA

GALLIA

## GALLIA

### ■ Became Roman 121-51 BC

The provinces of present-day France were among the most romanised of the empire and enjoyed extensive trade. The provinces exported glassware, wheat, wine and cheese, among other things.



## HISPANIA

### ■ Roman from 133 BC

Unlike neighbouring Gaul, the Romans had difficulty securing the entire Iberian Peninsula – particularly the central mountainous regions. Nevertheless, exports did happen, including crops, such as olives.



HISPANIA

## ASIA

### ■ Roman from 129 BC

Western Asia Minor had long been a rich area with a highly developed Hellenistic culture and proud ancient cities. The province was quickly romanised and further thrived under Roman rule.

ASIA

## AFRICA

### ■ Roman from 146 BC

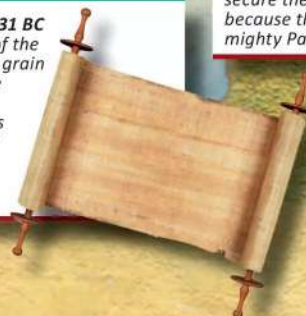
After the fall of Carthage, the Romans set up a province in North Africa to prevent a new superpower in the region. Over time, Africa became an important exporter of goods, such as olives, wine and wool.

AFRICA

## EGYPT

### ■ Roman from 31 BC

Egypt was one of the most important grain producers in the empire. It also provided textiles for clothing and papyrus for written documents.



## JUDEA

### ■ Roman from 63 BC

Despite numerous revolts – such as when the Romans had to occupy the Masada fortress – Rome clung convulsively to Judea to secure the land and sea routes to Egypt, and because the area formed a buffer against the mighty Parthian Empire to the east.



JUDEA

EGYPT



# “New cities were laid out in a Roman pattern”

>>> perpendicular to one another, with a forum as the natural meeting place and an amphitheatre, where the inhabitants could enjoy plays, races and gladiator fights.

As in Rome, water was supplied via canals and aqueducts. In Roman-era Cologne, 20,000 cubic metres of fresh spring water flowed daily from the German Eifel Mountains – equivalent to 230 litres of water per second. The aqueduct through which the water passed was 100 kilometres long – 32 kilometres shorter than the empire’s longest aqueduct, which stretched between the mountainous area around Djebel Zaghouan in present-day Tunisia and the ancient Punic capital Carthage.

All cities also had sewage systems to take waste water and human soil away from the urban centre.

## PROVINCES FLOURISHED

The peace and order created by Roman law and administration, together with the modern road network, facilitated trade in the vast empire. Each region soon developed its speciality: grain was exported from Egypt and North Africa, wine and olive oil from Italy and Spain. Berenice, a

city in Greece, made a huge profit selling *garum* – a fermented fish sauce made from mackerel or tuna, which was popular across most of the empire.

## LEGIONNAIRES CREATED WEALTH

Everywhere, the legionaries helped to create wealth by spending their wages in local markets, bodegas and brothels. Roman products also entered the provinces. Pistachios, pomegranates, figs, olives, melons and garlic soon became fashionable throughout Roman Europe.

Cities near the Roman legions that imported food were the first to adopt Roman eating habits, but the new customs eventually spread to more remote areas. Excavations of the legions’ residences have shown that glassware, small Roman statuettes and Roman pottery also found their way to the provinces – a Roman drinking vessel even appeared as far away as Cornwall.

Romans everywhere understood the need to utilise local raw materials and expertise. In Gaul and around the Danube, ironworks operated as imperial factories to make weapons for the Roman legions. In Lugdunum (now Lyon), a special official, the *procurator ferriarum galliarum*, probably supplied iron. Elsewhere in

Gaul, archaeologists have found traces of weapons production intended for the legions on the Rhine. From Palestine, merchants shipped glassware to the Italian coast, up the Po River to northern Italy, and on to the north-western provinces.

Roman goods were mainly used by the province’s elite, who also took the lead in



PONTIUS PILATE ?-c AD 40

## IMMORTALISED PREFECT

■ According to the New Testament, the emissary of Rome in Judea ordered Jesus crucified in AD 33. Historians don’t know much about Pontius Pilate, but inscriptions found in the area testify that he was prefect at the time of Jesus and therefore may

well have been responsible for his crucifixion. However, despite the Bible’s account, there is no indication that Pilate was afraid of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and that fear was behind his decision not to pardon Jesus. During his time as governor, Pilate took money from the Jews’ treasury to pay for the construction of an aqueduct. When the Jews subsequently protested, Pilate had them beaten by soldiers hidden in the crowd.

Governor of Judea in AD 26-36 – Probably from Central Italy – Crucified Jesus



## LONDINIUM

*Roman London was a typical example of the provincial cities built by the Romans.*

- 1 In the middle of the city stood the largest forum in Britannia.
- 2 In classical Roman style, all the central roads lay perpendicular to one another.
- 3 A three-kilometre-long city wall surrounded Londinium.
- 4 Merchant ships could dock along the Thames at solid piers built with giant beams.
- 5 In the north-east corner of the city was a vast, 50,000-m<sup>2</sup> Roman fort.

living emperor as a distant, ancestral figure – a symbol of virtue and justice – unlike the local Roman rulers, and especially the tax collectors, whom they hated, believing that they collected large sums from the locals just to line their own pockets.

## ROMANS DETERMINED EVERYTHING

The Roman system of provincial administration was simple in its basic form. During the republic, the provinces were ruled by a governor posted by Rome with the rank of procurator or proconsul. He was, like the other officials of the Roman Republic, appointed for one year at a time either by drawing lots or by the Senate.

After the introduction of the empire, however, Emperor Augustus decided that some of the provinces should belong to him directly. Most provinces were peaceful and required little supervision, but there were trouble spots, such as Judea, that the emperor kept on a short leash. Under this system, Augustus personally appointed governors, who could retain the office as long as the emperor so desired.

The governor was the province's supreme judicial authority and travelled throughout the territory to settle criminal cases and disputes. Since he could not reach all the cities, the provinces were divided into sections of the court with a capital city, which the governor visited for a few weeks each year. A sizeable entourage of officials accompanied him on these visits, and the cities therefore competed to become the seat of a Roman court.

For the governor, a true Roman, accustomed to the splendours of Rome, the inspection of provincial towns could be somewhat trying. The Roman legal expert Ulpian offered the following advice:

“When the Proconsul enters any other city ... he should permit it to be placed under his protection, and listen to the compliments bestowed upon him without evincing any discontent, since the people of the province do this in his honour”.

## CITIES COMPETED WITH EACH OTHER

One of the most important secrets behind the Romans' ability to rule such a large empire was that Roman officials almost

adopting other Roman ways of life. Large Roman-style country houses, known as villas, appeared throughout the empire. Each was decorated differently, but most took on the Roman custom of courtyards with free-standing statues and walls adorned with mosaics or paintings. They also had underfloor heating, where wood-burning stoves heated raised tiled floors.

The same political system and Latin language prevailed everywhere – although in some places it was only a written language. Roman coins – aureus and sesterces – were accepted from Germania in the north to Africa in the south.

Yet the communities were very different. The daily lives of the vast majority of the provincial population remained largely unchanged – which didn't trouble the Romans. As long as the province's inhabitants recognised Rome's absolute supremacy, they could do as they pleased.

This applied to both public life – clothing, housing and eating habits – and private matters, such as religion. For the

Romans, religion was not so much about faith, but about actions – for example, making sacrifices and building temples – that would placate the gods and make them generous. The Romans therefore had no problem with the people worshipping their own gods – as long as they also made room for a sacrifice to the Roman gods every now and then. All important cities had a temple dedicated to the most important Roman gods: Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. The Romans also encouraged the provincial inhabitants to worship deceased emperors as deities, as they quickly learned that an imperial cult helped create a sense of community to unite the empire's citizens.

While dead emperors were exalted as gods, many in the provinces perceived the

*While cities flourished, more than 90 percent of the empire's population lived in rural poverty; many suffered from malnutrition.*







**France.** The 2,000-year-old Roman amphitheatre in Nîmes is still in use for bull fights, re-enactments and concerts.



**Libya.** In Ptolemais – modern-day Tolmeita – in eastern Libya, remains of Roman vaulted water cisterns can still be seen under the ruins of the ancient city's forum.

always left local city councils in charge of the day-to-day running of provincial towns and the maintenance of law and order. The only requirement was that the city council's local elite remained loyal to Rome. In return for that loyalty, local rulers could be given the opportunity to pursue a political career in Rome or receive cash benefits for their home town.

The highest wish of any provincial council was to have its city named as the provincial metropolis, the home of the province's administrative and financial management. During the reign of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138), however, more and more cities in the same province were granted metropolis status – with the result that the larger cities competed fiercely to build the most beautiful houses, squares and amphitheatres to impress the Romans.

#### SPECIAL STATUS

The provincial cities were also classified according to whether they were deemed to be free cities – exempt from paying tax to Rome – or not. Although most free cities still had to pay property taxes, because the land belonged to Rome, some were exempted from paying even these taxes – either as a special privilege or because they had been granted *ius italicum*, the legal status afforded to Italian cities.

Cities with *ius italicum* demonstrated their status by exhibiting a statue of the naked god of wine, Silenus. The custom was imported from Rome, where similar statues were erected at the Roman Forum. Some

free cities gained their status because they had supported Rome during a war or crisis – while others enjoyed the special status because they were founded by Roman war veterans. One such city was, Narbo Martius (now Narbonne) in southern France, which was founded as Gaul's first Roman colony after the conquest of Gallia Narbonensis in 118 BC.

The area was quickly Romanised, and around 200 years after the city was founded, the Roman historian Pliny the Elder was able to assure his readers that the area “might be more truthfully

described as a part of Italy than as a province”. The author Strabo added, “They are no longer barbarians, but are, for the most part, transformed to the type of the Romans, both in their speech and in their modes of living, and some of them in their civic life as well.”

#### Six men

owned half the land in the province of Africa according to the historian Pliny the Elder.

#### CITIZENS ESCAPED PAYING TAX

In the western provinces, many cities were given the status of *municipia*, which meant that they had their own governing institutions and that the inhabitants of the cities obtained partial Roman citizenship. This was a great advantage because citizenship meant that their tax burden was greatly reduced. Provincial residents who were not Roman citizens paid both income tax and poll tax – a tax levied on every citizen regardless of wealth and income.

Roman citizens, on the other hand, had been exempt from wealth tax since 167 BC,

and only had to pay the hated inheritance tax and any duties due after selling slaves.

Citizenship was therefore highly sought, but it also provided other, far more weighty benefits to the provincial inhabitants: Roman citizens were also protected by Roman law and couldn't be subjected to humiliating and brutal punishments, such as torture, whipping and crucifixion. Nor could a Roman citizen be sentenced to death, unless he was first found guilty of a treasonous crime.

#### CITIZENSHIP WAS AWARDED FOR 25 YEARS IN THE ROMAN ARMY

Such privileges were more than most provincial residents could have dared to hope for before the arrival of the Romans. The promise of citizenship therefore quickly became one of the Romans' most important tools in encouraging conquered people to voluntarily submit. Roman citizenship existed to varying degrees, and the more the inhabitants of a province adapted and accepted Imperial power, the more rights they were granted by their Roman rulers.

In an attempt to secure the loyalty of the provincial inhabitants, it was constantly made easier to obtain citizenship, including through the army. Only Roman citizens could be recruited for military service in Rome's own army, but provincial subjects could enlist in the *auxilia*, the auxiliary troops. After 25 years fighting for Rome as auxiliaries, they would be granted full Roman citizenship – a rule introduced during the imperial period, which was widely used under Emperor Claudius in the





**Turkey.** The ruins of Ephesus, on the coast of Turkey, testify to the magnitude of the Romans' magnificent provincial capitals.



**Britannia.** In AD 122-128, the Romans built Hadrian's Wall – a 118-kilometre-long fortification across northern England. It marked the northernmost border of the empire.

Many poor provincial residents – not least in Britannia – slaved for the empire in mines.

## “ Roman citizens were also protected by Roman law ”

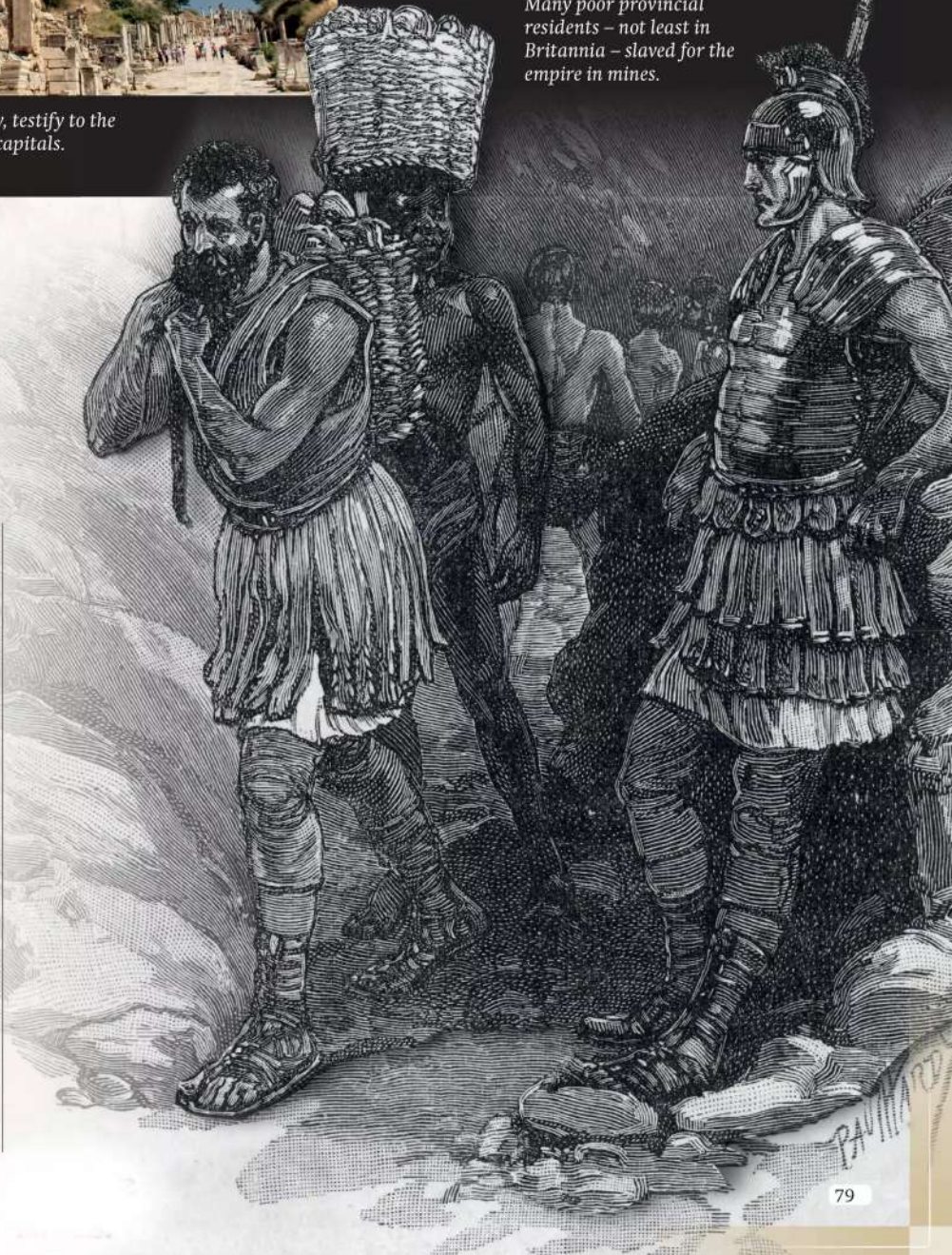
first century AD. Children of soldiers in the auxiliary troops also automatically became Roman citizens, which no doubt motivated many to enlist for so many years.

In AD 212, Emperor Caracalla took the final step and declared all free inhabitants of the Roman Empire to be Roman citizens and entitled to the accompanying rights.

### ROMAN HERITAGE SURVIVED

Roman supremacy created peace and prosperity for centuries. But when Germanic tribes, Huns and Goths from the East invaded the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries, the provinces fell one by one. The Roman peace, which had lasted many hundreds of years, ended abruptly, and the provinces sank into gruelling internal conflicts, poverty and chaos.

Cities, roads and aqueducts crumbled, but rudiments of the Roman Empire – such as law and language – continued to exist as a common heritage for the entire former empire, not least in Western Europe, where the Spanish, French, Portuguese, Romanians and others still speak languages derived from Roman Latin. ■









# ROME'S TRADE EMPIRE

146 BC-AD 200

The legions won new land for the empire, but Roman merchants brought stability and prosperity. Enterprising traders carried millions of tonnes of goods throughout the empire on barges and cargo ships, bringing delight to Rome's decadent aristocracy and food to the city's ever-hungry masses. They also enriched trade in the provinces, where the wealthy learned to enjoy luxurious wine from Campania and olive oil from North Africa.





## 146 BC-AD 200

**146 BC** The Romans defeat Carthage and take control of all the Mediterranean trade routes.

**121 BC** The first Roman merchants sail through the Strait of Gibraltar.

**27 BC** Augustus seizes power and ushers in a long period of peace in which trade thrives.

**AD 43** Rome occupies Britannia and high-volume trade follows.

**c. AD 170-200** Wars and epidemics reduce trade in the Roman Empire.



Emperor Augustus sailed down the coast of the Italian peninsula with his retinue a few days before his death. The great Roman ruler had reached the bustling port of Puteoli (now Pozzuoli) when he passed a merchant ship. The crew and passengers, all dressed in white with laurel wreaths, saluted their patron, shouting that they owed Augustus their lives, their freedom and – most importantly – their prosperity.

The emperor had been much more than a great general – he was also a benefactor to marketplaces and trade routes. During his peaceful reign and with his reforms, Augustus had brought prosperity and stability to all corners of the empire. The people had become richer than ever. In its heyday, Rome was not only a military superpower, but also an enterprising trade empire. Commerce held the imperial powerhouse together and made it flourish. Trade created buzzing markets, elongated trade routes and funded impressive constructions. Trade, in short, contributed to the greatness of the Roman Empire.

#### ROME USED CARTHAGE'S OLD ROUTES

The enterprising trade network that centred on Rome didn't appear from nowhere. From the start, the Romans built on the extensive trade empire of another of antiquity's mighty kingdoms.

In 265 BC, Carthage was the most important power in the Mediterranean. Its empire had been founded around 800 BC by the Phoenicians, who came from modern-day Lebanon. The people mastered

shipping, and they showed overwhelming perseverance in controlling the trade routes of the western Mediterranean. In a few years, the Carthaginians created a network of trading posts that stretched from the coasts of Spain and France to Sicily and Sardinia, and further south along the entire coast of North Africa.

In the Carthaginians' efforts to establish trade routes, they had come into conflict with other maritime peoples, especially the Greeks. But their relations with the city state of Rome were generally good and peaceful – not least because of two treaties between Rome and Carthage that protected Carthage's trade routes, and which were drafted in Rome in 509 and 348 BC.

However, the situation changed radically after 265 BC, when the Romans went to war with Carthage in the first Punic War. Several major wars later, the Romans not only defeated the Carthaginians, but they also seized control of the entire Mediterranean. Rome could now exploit the trade network that had been built up by their newly vanquished enemies.

#### TRADE GREW IN STEP WITH ROME

By 167 BC, the Romans' control of lucrative trade routes was so complete that the Senate was able to stop collecting taxes in Italy – the provinces surrounding the Mediterranean provided more than enough revenue to meet the republic's needs.

Rome, like the rest of the Mediterranean cultures, was dependent on imports of grain, olives and wine. As the population and the army grew, so did the need for grain and various raw materials, such as

**Terracotta lamps** made in northern Italy and North Africa have been excavated throughout the Roman Empire.



Goods flowed in to the port of Ostia near Rome. The port city grew as a result and was filled with luxury facilities, such as the Baths of Buticosus.

metals and animal skins. This prompted Roman merchants to travel further inland in their search for suitable goods. The trade empire was taking shape, and the exchange of goods was taking place farther and farther away from Rome.

In trading towns such as present-day Marseille, the Romans bought raw materials, grain and slaves. In exchange, the local elite imported luxury items, such as amphorae of Italian wine. Wine from Campania, south of Rome, was also shipped to the Alps and along rivers to the coasts of France. From there, the Romans sent goods further north, possibly via intermediaries, through what is now Northern France and on into Britain. In 121 BC, the Romans ventured through the Strait of Gibraltar to trade in British tin.

#### PEACE ALLOWED PROGRESS

Emperor Augustus's reign (27 BC-AD 14) proved crucial to trade. After a period of internal power struggles, Rome's first emperor brought peace and stability that enabled the economy to thrive – not least at home, in Italy.

Metalworking flourished in Rome, and woollen products became important commodities in many Italian cities. Glassblowing developed into a lucrative business in Campania and northern Italy. In general, goods were made in small workshops by craftsmen and sold locally, but there were exceptions: in Arretium (now Arezzo), north of Rome, potters in as many as one hundred different workshops made *terra sigillata*, bright red clay pottery, which they decorated with a shiny glaze whose recipe was jealously guarded. The moulded plates, bowls and dishes from Arretium were exported across the empire, and included the potters' signature to prove that they were genuine items.

Outside Italy, the economy also gained momentum under Augustus. The emperor expanded and stabilised the empire and founded new cities and outposts for his legions. This was accompanied by an expansion of the road network, which helped the new locations become trading

#### TECHNOLOGY.....

#### CULTURE.....

#### ECONOMY.....

#### DAILY LIFE.....

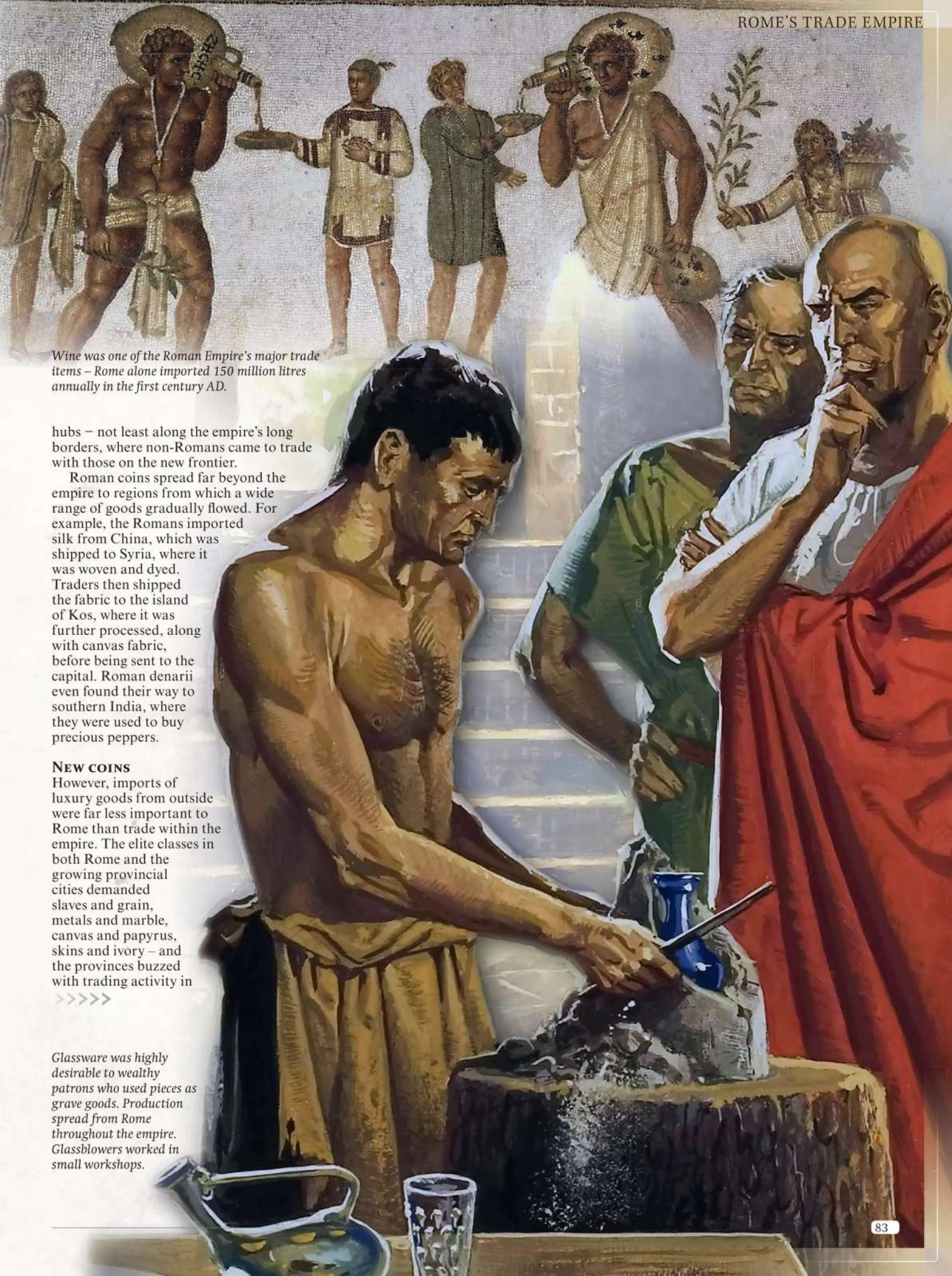


### Amphora transported everything

The amphora was the Romans' go-to container and was crucial for transporting goods over long distances. The jars were typically made from clay and often had the contents, year and maker's name stamped or painted

on them. They were used for moving liquids, such as oil or wine, and could hold around 25 litres. Their pointed bottoms could be plunged into sand, which held them tight and upright. They could also be stacked on ships.





*Wine was one of the Roman Empire's major trade items – Rome alone imported 150 million litres annually in the first century AD.*

hubs – not least along the empire's long borders, where non-Romans came to trade with those on the new frontier.

Roman coins spread far beyond the empire to regions from which a wide range of goods gradually flowed. For example, the Romans imported silk from China, which was shipped to Syria, where it was woven and dyed. Traders then shipped the fabric to the island of Kos, where it was further processed, along with canvas fabric, before being sent to the capital. Roman denarii even found their way to southern India, where they were used to buy precious peppers.

#### NEW COINS

However, imports of luxury goods from outside were far less important to Rome than trade within the empire. The elite classes in both Rome and the growing provincial cities demanded slaves and grain, metals and marble, canvas and papyrus, skins and ivory – and the provinces buzzed with trading activity in

>>>>

*Glassware was highly desirable to wealthy patrons who used pieces as grave goods. Production spread from Rome throughout the empire. Glassblowers worked in small workshops.*



>>> the columnar marketplaces. From Britannia in the north to Hispania in the west and the African provinces to the south, slaves and convicts were worked to death mining gold, copper, tin and silver for Rome's legions and people.

Emperor Augustus's decision to reform the kingdom's currency gave further impetus to trade. In the years before the emperor seized power, Rome's monetary system had been a mishmash of various currencies. The emperor set out to change that. He preserved the old gold and silver base, but added new brass and copper coins. These were initially minted to pay the legionaries, but they gradually spread throughout the western provinces, which benefited commerce there. In many places, however, the Romans allowed local monetary systems to coexist with the Roman currency. For example, imperial officials allowed some Spanish cities to use their own currency, and in the eastern provinces, local coins continued to circulate alongside Rome's for 300 years.

## ROME WAS INSATIABLE

Gradually, trade routes connected the entire empire, by land and sea. The Roman Empire functioned as a giant common market, with limited duties and taxes. The prevalence of the Latin language and Roman law made it simple to conduct trade between provinces. The intricate road network, originally built to enable the army to move at speed, was now put to good use by merchants.

Most important, however, were the waterways, where large quantities of goods could be transported easily and quickly. To protect merchant cargoes from being lost at sea during their long voyages, the Romans built a series of lighthouses to guide ship captains, and the fleet constantly kept pirates in check. Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, served as Rome's industrial port and developed into a thriving trading town with huge warehouses. Slaves transported the goods by river barges from the port to Rome, a little way inland. From Ostia, merchants could reach Carthage in three to five days. There were also routes to Egypt, Spain, France and Asia Minor.

In its heyday, Rome abounded with all sorts of merchants from many different nations. Some specialised in luxury

goods. They imported wine, olive oil, honey, salted fish, wool and fine cloth from Spain. There was wine from France, glass from Syria, silk from the Far East, precious stones from India, incense from Arabia, marble from Africa, and amber from the Nordic countries. In the words of the Greek philosopher Aristides, Rome had become "the common market of the world".

The wealthy patrician class typically despised the merchants who sold their wares in their own small shops or in markets that took place in open spaces or under imposing colonnades. The vast majority of merchants did not earn much, but money lenders, factory owners and large commercial agents could become very rich. A few freed slaves were among those who accumulated large fortunes, many of whom embraced trading as a way of life. Most Romans, however, were just hard-working, ordinary people who, despite the empire's growing wealth, never managed to climb the city's social ladder or amass wealth of any kind. To counteract rebellion, the emperors made sure the poor were

given access to plenty of free or very cheap grain. Some historians estimate that as many as three quarters of Rome's inhabitants were entirely dependent on imperial grain rations.

The city's insatiable need for grain had a direct impact on agriculture in North Africa, which eventually replaced Sicily as Rome's primary source of grain. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of grain poured into Rome every year from present-day Tunisia and Egypt. Wine and oil were also eventually given away for free to the city's poor. Augustus also introduced controls to ensure meat remained affordable.

## PROVINCES FLOURISHED

Rome's thirst for goods was good news for many provincial towns. In some places, local artisans outcompeted their peers in

Rome's neighbourhoods. Glass and bronze goods from Italy were overtaken by products made in Gaul, which also took over the main pottery industry with copies of the exclusive pottery from Arretium.

Later, in the third century, the Rhineland became the main production centre for pottery. The region would later go on to become the most important industrial area in Europe, but it was under Rome's rule that its production output first matched that of the eastern Mediterranean.

However, the expansion in trade was not just a European phenomenon. From Syria, an almost unbroken chain

## BRITONS BOUGHT ROMAN LUXURY

■ In Britannia, the Romans exchanged luxury goods for raw materials. Merchants sold fine glassware and amphorae full of wine and olive oil to wealthy Britons with a taste for Mediterranean luxury, while local merchants exported tonnes of grain and metals south, including to the Roman empire on the Rhine.



## SPANISH MADE TONNES OF FISH SAUCE

■ The Spanish and Portuguese coasts abounded with large plants producing the fish sauce garum. Under the modern city of Cádiz (Gades to the Romans), archaeologists uncovered a plant with 26 basins for garum production, and in Baelo Claudia, near Gibraltar, you can still see the tubs where the salted fish was fermented.



Germany eventually became a major exporter of pottery.



# SHIPS PROVIDED ROMANS WITH GOODS



Rivers and seas were the main thoroughfares for Rome's merchants. From Italy, the Romans exported wine and olives to the provinces, but the bulk of goods flowed the other way to the million-strong city of Rome.

Grain, wine, glassware, metals and marble came to Rome from provincial producers, while rare goods were imported from distant lands outside the empire. Amber from the Nordic countries, silk from China, and animal goods from the savannas of Africa all crossed the empire's borders on their way to Rome.



The Mediterranean Sea and Europe's rivers were the Romans' principal trade routes.

## LUXURIES CAUSED A TRADE DEFICIT

■ According to the historian Pliny, the demand of Rome's elite for silk, precious stones, pearls and other luxuries from highly developed empires in the east was so great that it drained Rome's coffers of silver. One hundred million Roman sesterces ended up in Arab, Indian and Chinese pockets annually.



## OSTIA KEY FOR ROME

■ Most of Rome's goods arrived via the port of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber. Here slaves loaded tonnes of grain, olives and other goods on to barges that then transported them up the river towards Rome.

## LIGHTHOUSE MARKED THE WAY

■ With 600,000 inhabitants, Alexandria was the empire's second largest city, a busy metropolis known for its impressive lighthouse – the world's largest. According to the historian Strabo, Alexandria was the world's most important trade centre and benefited from Rome's annual demand for tens of thousands of papyrus scrolls.



## ENGINEERS BUILT 1.2 KM OF QUAYS

■ In Leptis Magna, in Libya, the Romans built a port with a 1,200-metre-long quay where cargo ships could dock. Even today, remains of the port's jetties and warehouses can be seen. Emperor Septimius Severus came from the city and built a magnificent basilica and forum c. AD 200.





## TECHNOLOGY.....

## CULTURE.....

## ECONOMY.....

## DAILY LIFE.....



## Mercury protected the merchants

In Roman mythology, Mercury was the god of trade, recognisable by his staff and winged sandals, which he had inherited from his role model, the Greeks' lightning-fast god of trade and messengers, Hermes. Mercury guarded

traders and travellers, and the Romans worshiped him in a temple at Rome's Circus Maximus – an extremely fitting venue for the speedy god of commerce, because the venue served as both a racetrack and a market.

>>>> of cities stretched east along the trade routes to India and China, where textile production flourished.

### EVERYONE LOVED SAUCES

One of the Romans' great export success stories was the salty fish sauce, garum. Everyone seasoned their food with it, and modern-day Spain, Portugal and Morocco produced garum in giant plants to meet the fierce demand. Production even reached the northern coast of the Black Sea, where around 20,000 tonnes of raw fish were constantly fermented.

The stench from the production was so awful that the plants were set up outside the walls of the garum-producing cities. When the sauce had finished fermenting, fish sauce merchants filled amphora after

amphora and shipped the containers to markets in Syria, Britain and Greece. A particularly fine type of fish sauce from Scarus in Spain gained such great fame that it was almost akin to one of today's top brands. When Scarus's name adorned a jar of garum, it was probably the equivalent of a Heinz label on a ketchup bottle today.

Garum, however, was an exception. Only a few goods were manufactured a long way from where they were used. Most goods were produced and used locally. The Romans never developed a mass market for goods that could really have established large-scale production and export industries. The vast majority of imperial subjects were simply too poor to buy anything beyond their basic needs. Plus, the Romans never developed mass production

techniques that could reduce prices sufficiently to make the goods affordable to the lower classes. Cheap labour and slaves were plentiful, so manufacturers had little incentive to develop advanced technology that could produce more merchandise over a set period of time. Instead, the Romans typically just spent more man-hours making more things whenever they needed to increase production – if you wanted to make more glassware, for instance, you simply hired more glassblowers.

### EPIDEMICS SLOWED DOWN TRADE

Another major obstacle to trade was transport routes, which were probably improved, but only so far. Overland routes were slow and expensive – it could take 12 days for a heavily loaded ox cart to cover 80 kilometres – and shipping goods across the sea remained risky due to the danger of ships being wrecked or lost to piracy.

Agriculture therefore remained by far the most lucrative occupation in the Roman Empire, and the wealthiest people in the empire were almost all landowners who had become fat on the sale of wheat and barley. However, it's likely that some of the richest landowners also dabbled in commercial ventures – for example, they sometimes financed the transport of goods by ship or lent money to aspiring traders.

Historians remain uncertain about the exact extent and pattern of trade in the Roman Empire, but it probably peaked

around AD 165-170.

After this time, epidemics started to cause the population to decline. At the same time, the wars of Emperor Marcus Aurelius most likely slowed the

exchange of goods between the provinces from around AD 170 onwards. ■

“One of the Romans' great export success stories was the salty fish sauce, garum”



Expensive vases and other imported goods were reserved for the wealthy patrician class. The majority of the empire's population could only afford to buy daily necessities.





Since 2003, archaeologists have excavated several Roman merchant ships on a construction site near Utrecht in the Netherlands.



Rome even had specialised cushion shops, as can be seen in this relief from around AD 50.



Excavated Roman ships, scissors, hardware and a well-preserved wooden bucket testify that the northern part of the Rhine was a key transport route for the Roman Empire's many merchants.







# ROME'S AMAZING ENGINEERS

312 BC-AD 226

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The Romans ruled not only on the battlefield but also on the building site. The empire's engineering, inventions, and edifices surpassed those of all competitors.

With revolutionary and extremely practical solutions – from roads and water supplies to gladiatorial arenas, domed roofs, and steam baths with underfloor heating – Rome's colossal construction industry provided a constant reminder of the empire's supremacy across three continents. Roman architecture has proved so durable that it still hasn't passed its expiry date.





## 312 BC-AD 226

312 BC

Construction of the first major road, the Via Appia, begins.

200 BC Romans

invent concrete by mixing water with ash, lime, and rock.

AD 80 The

world's largest amphitheatre, the Colosseum, is inaugurated.

100 The

empire is connected by 80,000 km of roads.

117 Emperor

Hadrian, who builds the Pantheon, comes to power.

When the Romans built, it could be a matter of life or death. That proved to be the case for the renowned second century architect Apollodorus of Damascus, who made the mistake of criticising his emperor's building plans. Hadrian, who came to power in AD 117, was an architect himself and deeply fascinated by geometry, which led him to devise and draw a detailed plan of a new temple to the god Venus. The emperor reportedly showed his draft to Apollodorus, who was unconvinced by what he saw: the proportions of the statues sitting inside the temple were all wrong.

When Hadrian received word of Apollodorus's criticism, he flew into a rage. Banishment was followed later by execution. Meanwhile, the temple was built to the emperor's specifications.

**BUILT ON GREEK KNOWLEDGE**

Roman architecture was far more than beautiful facades and elaborate arches. Their structures were often products of a dedicated search for practical solutions to everyday problems. The Romans were great warriors, but they were superb engineers, too. The empire was like a gigantic construction company that surpassed all contemporary civilisations by some distance when it came to engineering. The

superpower's builders created the most extensive road network in antiquity, which still forms the backbone of modern roads today, and they developed carefully devised water systems – aqueducts – to bring water to the empire's growing cities.

It didn't stop there. They also built impressive temples to their gods, such as the Pantheon, along with the Colosseum, the world's largest amphitheatre. They constructed bridges crossing wild rivers, tunnels blasted through huge mountain ranges, and well-established bathing establishments where residents could wash themselves clean. In short, the Romans were the best-skilled, most-visionary and – by no means least – most-efficient craftsmen in the ancient world.

The Roman engineers' inventiveness and ability to produce practical solutions were crucial in driving the growing empire. Mammoth public construction projects helped the Roman elite to keep the various peoples in their expanding territories happy. The empire's inhabitants received clean drinking water, while its generals could rely on roads that allowed them to swiftly deploy their legions to distant lands.

Despite the Romans' ingenuity, not all their innovations were of their own making. They drew on old ideas, concepts and buildings techniques, which they refined

and perfected. And that was their genius: they took the best from others – including from Greek engineers – and developed it. Both roads and aqueducts already existed, but Roman engineers added an unprecedented level of technological sophistication. Even the invention of concrete, a revolutionary building material, came from refining a Greek discovery.

**ROMANS PAVED THE WAY TO VICTORY**

The most important thing for the growing empire was its roads. Roman pavers formed a network built using robust materials and methods – some roads have lasted for two millennia and remain in use today in places like Syria and Algeria. Antiquity's most advanced infrastructure wasn't simply for the benefit of Roman citizens but bound the entire empire and its many peoples together, while ensuring imperial troops could advance rapidly to any war zone.

These stone-paved highways made it possible for legionaries to march from Rome to Britain in just over two months. They brought with them increased trade, and the Romans founded a comprehensive postal service linking province to province. At the empire's height – around AD 100 – the Romans had built 80,000 kilometres of road stretching across three continents – the equivalent of a single road circumnavigating the globe twice.

The first roads were created for the benefit of the army. In the fourth century BC, Rome found itself at war with the Samnites in Campania, a region of southern Italy. Troops and supplies could not reach the battlefield quickly enough, and the Roman soldiers were slaughtered. The crisis demanded a typical – meaning a practical – Roman solution: they decided to build a road to the disputed region.

In 312 BC, Rome's senior public construction official, the censor Appius Claudius, sent thousands of soldiers and convicts out with picks and shovels to build a four-metre-wide road to Campania. The

## THE ROMAN ROAD TO VICTORY

*Six carefully laid layers of clay, gravel and stone served as highways for the Roman armies and helped the legions to rapidly advance and conquer territory. The solid structure made it all but impossible to wear the roads down.*

**PROVINCIAL ROADS:**

The empire's road network extended all the way to the outermost provinces. In Sbeitla in present-day Tunisia, the 2,000-year-old Roman roads are still in use.

**PAVING:** Roman road workers make stone paving on this relief from the first century BC. Both slaves and soldiers worked on road construction in the Roman Empire.





## MEANWHILE, IN CHINA

## MILLIONS OF CRAFTSMEN BUILT THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

It wasn't just the Romans who created revolutionary structures. In the fifth century BC, construction began on the largest man-made structure ever built. The Great Wall of China was designed as a fortification to protect the northern border of the Chinese Empire.

The basic structure was completed under Qin Shi Huangdi around 220 BC, but expansion continued in stages until the 16th century AD.



following year, it was ready and immediately turned the tide of war – Roman engineering had led to a Roman victory on the battlefield. It was a story that would be repeated many times. The “queen of the long roads”, as the Romans dubbed the new Via Appia, became the prototype for all future Roman roads.

Over the next six hundred years, a road network sprang up throughout the Italian peninsula and out into the provinces. They served as highways for their armies, which could thus better maintain and secure connections to the newly conquered territories. Roads often ended at a *castra* (military fortress), and a corps of military engineers with civil engineering backgrounds oversaw the planning.

Although prisoners and slaves also took part in building roads, legionnaires provided an essential labour force. Thus, even in peacetime, the empire's rulers were able to exploit their thousands of soldiers. This work, however, was so hard and tedious

that soldiers repeatedly mutinied – a rare sight in the disciplined army. Under Tiberius (AD 14-37), one group forced their superiors to cut and dig just like the troops.

## SIX LAYERS ENSURED DURABILITY

Roman roads have proven extremely durable due to their special construction – often requiring no repairs for a hundred years. The building process followed a fixed procedure: first, workers removed trees and other obstacles. They next dug a trench around one metre deep that was wide enough for two horse-drawn carriages to pass each other – where the road curved the widths were

increased because the carriages had difficulty turning and so required extra space.

Once dug, road workers began to lay down six layers of material: at the bottom, the earth was levelled and above it was laid a layer of compacted sand or dry earth. Above this was laid a layer of *statumen* (crushed rock). The third layer – *rudus* – comprised fist-sized stones that helped drain rainwater away. The road's core comprised a fourth layer of pebbles mixed with sand. The fifth, stabilising, layer consisted of gravel and sand. And finally, the top pavement was a series of hewn stone slabs of basalt or granite. The surface was cambered – the middle part was a little higher than the rest – to ensure rainwater drained into ditches on either side of the road. The road itself was also raised slightly above the surrounding terrain to prevent flooding – and to give the legionaries a defensive position should they be attacked.

Roman ingenuity didn't end here. Engineers also used a special device called a *groma* – a special sighting device with lead





“ The largest aqueducts carried 190,000 cubic metres of water to the city every day... delivered via clay, wood or lead pipes ”

>>> weights – to ensure the road was laid in an exactly straight line. This meant that newly built towns and military fortresses were full of streets at exact right angles to each other – which would have appealed to the geometric-loving Emperor Hadrian.

Their technological skills also overcame any challenges posed by the terrain. Bridges over rivers were always built with extra clearance in case the waters rose. Road workers created tunnels by alternately heating and cooling rock with fire and water. There were no lights, though; travellers were handed torches at the entrance. Romans also crossed marshlands by building roads on a foundation of wooden poles.

#### HUGE WATER CHANNELS BUILT

While the roads transported troops around the empire along with food to its insatiable and rapidly growing capital, aqueducts solved another problem for Rome's million-plus inhabitants.

Previously, the Tiber river along with rainwater and the natural springs beneath the city had supplied

all of Rome's needs, but as both city and population grew the natural sources were far from sufficient – or clean enough.

Consul Appius Claudius switched his attention to the construction of a 16.5-kilometre-long water pipeline – the first aqueduct to carry fresh drinking water to the city's citizens. The challenge for

engineers was to work out how to get the water to travel the 16.5 kilometres towards the city using only gravity. Roman architects used a *dioptra* – a sighting tube fitted with weights and protractors – to calculate the exact slope required: a drop of just two metres per kilometre ensured the right amount of water flowed to the city.

By 312 BC, the Aqua Appia aqueduct was complete. It was so successful that by AD 226 the city had eleven similar aqueducts, totalling around 500 kilometres of channels. These carried water from rivers, lakes and springs in the surrounding mountains, with some sources up to 91 kilometres away from Rome.

The largest aqueducts carried 190,000 cubic metres of water to the city every day.

Once in Rome, the water went





into settling reservoirs to purify it, before it was delivered via clay, wood or lead pipes. Lead water pipes have long been suspected of poisoning the Romans, driving them insane and even aiding the downfall of the Roman Empire. But given the fact the vast majority of pipes were made from clay because it was cheapest material, the hypothesis is an unlikely one. More expensive lead pipes were only laid where the water system was particularly tortuous.

#### ROMANS USED 1,000 LITRES A DAY

Normally, the water ran along the aqueducts, which in places were gigantic multi-storey constructions carrying multiple channels of water, built on high, masonry arches. However, Rome's water supply also travelled underground in stone, brick and concrete conduits through rock massifs.

The Romans also built aqueducts in their most remote provinces. The conquerors always examined the water supply before building a new city. The longest aqueduct, measuring 132 kilometres, was built in the Roman province Africa on the other side of the Mediterranean in present-day Tunisia.

Aqueduct building really took off after the Romans developed concrete. The Greeks and Middle Eastern peoples had already worked with similar material, but the Romans learned to mix volcanic ash with clay to create a kind of mortar. Around 200 BC, builders experimented with mixing limestone, water and pebbles into the ash mixture and created –

#### TECHNOLOGY



#### CULTURE

#### ECONOMY

#### EVERYDAY

### Building boom made Romans rich

The furious pace of Roman construction had a hugely beneficial impact on the empire's economy. Although slaves made up a large part of the workforce, the building projects also created work opportunities for Rome's artisans, who

were well paid by the project's leaders. When carpenters, stonemasons and other artisans spent their wages, merchants and innkeepers benefited, who then spent money in turn to help keep the economy ticking over.

much to their surprise – a material that was rock hard when solid.

The revolutionary concrete was so effective that today water still flows across some of the same stretches as two thousand years ago. At the mouths of the aqueducts in Rome, the inhabitants drank the water from the city's 1,222 fountains. The running water was also piped to the public latrines, where toilet seats were placed in rows next to each other in an open unisex space – in this way, toilet visits were a common and even social event for the city's citizens.

The aqueducts provided enormous amounts of drinking and bathing water – each Roman had access to up to a thousand litres a day, more than the average city inhabitant consumes today.

Beneath the toilets, sewers – the last stop for the aqueduct's water – carried the inhabitants' waste into the river. The sewers

were high and wide to accommodate the slaves who were forced to crawl down and clean them. Around seven hundred slaves – along with any willing soldiers – worked across the entire water supply.

In some areas, Roman plumbing wasn't surpassed until the end of the nineteenth century. The Romans' enthusiasm for their aqueducts was made clear through the historian Pliny the Elder who described them as "marvels which are unsurpassed in virtue of their genuine value... we shall readily admit there had never been anything more remarkable in the whole world".

#### WATER WAS SIPHONED OFF

It wasn't just Roman engineers who used their creativity on the water supply. Thieves had their own clever ideas. Most of the water from the aqueducts wasn't for private use, so some Romans stole water from

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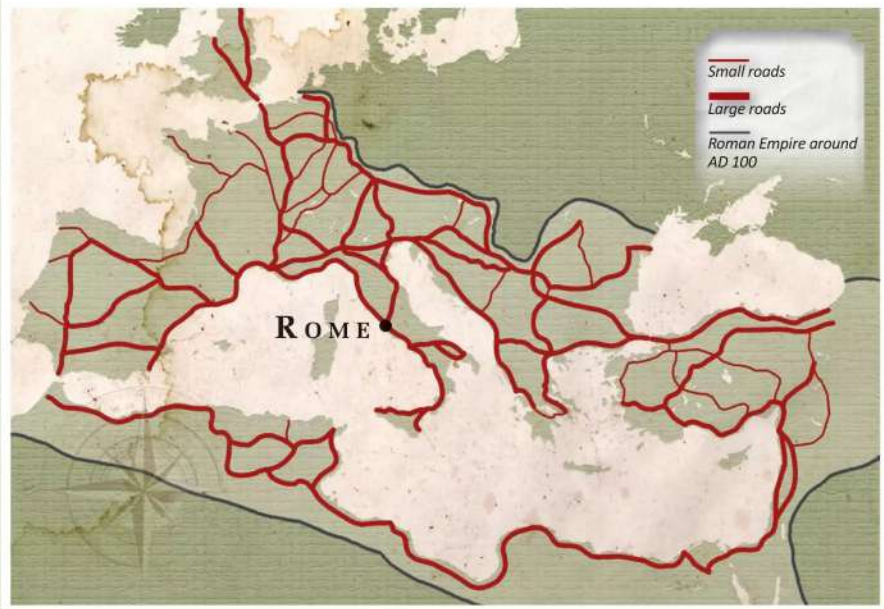


- A** The *groma* (sighting instrument) was a vertical rod with a cross at the top.
- B** Five lines hung from the cross, each with a weight at its end. The surveyor aimed to make two of the lines plus the central one align with a point.
- C** The lines on the other joint could be used to calculate right angles.
- D** An assistant placed sticks in a line according to the surveyor's instructions.

### 80,000-KILOMETRE ROAD NETWORK LINKED THE PROVINCES

■ The Roman road network stretched from the province of Britannia in the north to Alexandria in the south. The main roads were typically paid for by the Roman state, while

smaller roads were built at the provinces' own expense. The longest road in the empire was the *Via Nerva*, which stretched 2,000 km along the entire African Mediterranean coast.







The Empire's giant aqueducts weren't stopped by the landscape – even by the gorge in the Spanish town of Nerja. After the empire fell, its building knowledge was lost for generations, until Roman civil engineer Julius Frontinus's book on aqueducts was discovered in an Italian monastery in 1429.

public facilities. Some placed special pipes in the water reservoirs, others made holes in the aqueducts, often in collaboration with corrupt water supply workers. Water thieves even built a secret network of pipes underneath Rome's roads to siphon water away for private use: watering fields during the summer months, or supplying shops, private homes and the city's many brothels.

The law punished water theft with a fine of 100,000 sesterii – around one percent of the annual salary of a Roman soldier. It was apparently such a problem that the

Roman water commissioner Frontinus ordered patrols along the aqueducts and public fountains, so “that the water may flow without interruption, day and night”. It's far from certain, however, that it would have been enough to deter the creative thieves.

#### TOWNSFOLK LOVED SPAS

An important destination for the water was the many

*On tricky stretches, Romans used lead pipes to redirect the flow of water.*

Roman baths. The city had over nine hundred public baths, some with room for up to a thousand people. Communal baths were an important part of Roman life – a social hub – but they were also a masterclass in engineering. Water was both hot and cold, with steam baths alongside dry, heated rooms. During the baths, slaves fed underground furnaces with firewood to heat the water and carry hot air into the cavity walls. In this way, the air, water, and even the marble that the Romans sat on were kept pleasantly warm. The Romans even constructed underfloor heating in several places.

The baths were antiquity's equivalent of today's wellness and fitness centres. Citizens could perform gymnastics, lift weights, and receive massages. At the same time, the baths were havens where Romans could enjoy a bite of food, walk in the adjoining gardens, or hang out with friends in the large, basilica-shaped halls. Jugglers, musicians and philosophers provided entertainment. Some bathing establishments even had libraries installed to provide a rich source of reading material.

The largest public baths, called *thermae* (hot springs or hot baths), were built by

emperors and the rich as vanity projects to boost their popularity with citizens. The entrance fee was therefore low – and sometimes even free – so the baths were crowded with people, particularly on hot afternoons when Romans typically had time off. Large *thermae* also housed sports fields where the Romans could play an early form of handball, or perhaps run, wrestle or even box before taking their bath. Visitors could also swim in special pools.

One of the largest and most elegant public baths was the third century AD Baths of Caracalla, which for several centuries was counted as one of Rome's seven wonders. The establishment stretched over 100,000 square metres and could house 1,600 people. The *thermae* was adorned with statues, columns and highly coloured panelled walls. It teemed with children and the elderly, men and women, free citizens and slaves, who frequently bathed naked together. The warmest room in Caracalla's *thermae* – the *caldarium* (hot room) – was 35 metres wide and was crowned by a concrete dome.

Hot air and water heated to over 38°C created sticky 100 percent humidity levels that opened the bathers' pores. The room was heated with another innovative Roman invention: a form of underfloor central heating. An open space beneath the room was filled with air heated from a fireplace downstairs to warm the floor above.

Although primarily used in public baths, archaeologists have found the remains of such heating systems in private houses in the northern provinces, including present-day Britain and Germany.

At the end of their visit, bathers cooled off and closed their pores in cold pools. Romans apparently appreciated their baths so much

that when a foreign visitor asked an emperor why he bathed every day, he was told, “Because I do not have the time to bathe twice a day.”

#### MARBLE CITIES SPRANG UP

The public baths' extreme luxury was underlined by the use of marble, a new and important material in Roman architecture. At the start of the first

“The largest public baths were built by emperors and the rich as a vanity project to boost their popularity.”

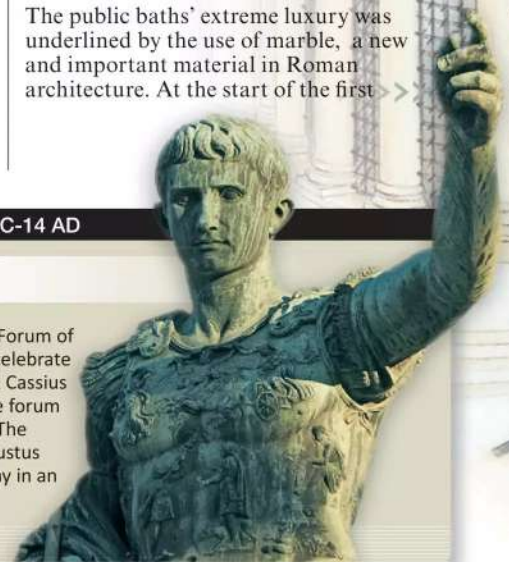
#### EMPEROR AUGUSTUS 63 BC-14 AD

### ROME'S BUILDER

■ Augustus reportedly said that he transformed Rome from a city of bricks to one of marble. It's certainly true that the emperor was behind extensive building works that helped transform Rome into antiquity's most magnificent city. Augustus was born and raised with the name Gaius Octavius. He used his own talent and family connections to Julius Caesar to become the first emperor of the Roman Empire after a drawn-out

civil war. His most famous works include the Forum of Augustus, dedicated to Mars, god of war, to celebrate his victory over Caesar's assassins Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi. Although parts of the forum are hidden today, the ruins can still be seen. The emperor also funded the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Theatre of Marcellus, plus led the way in an extensive road-building programme.

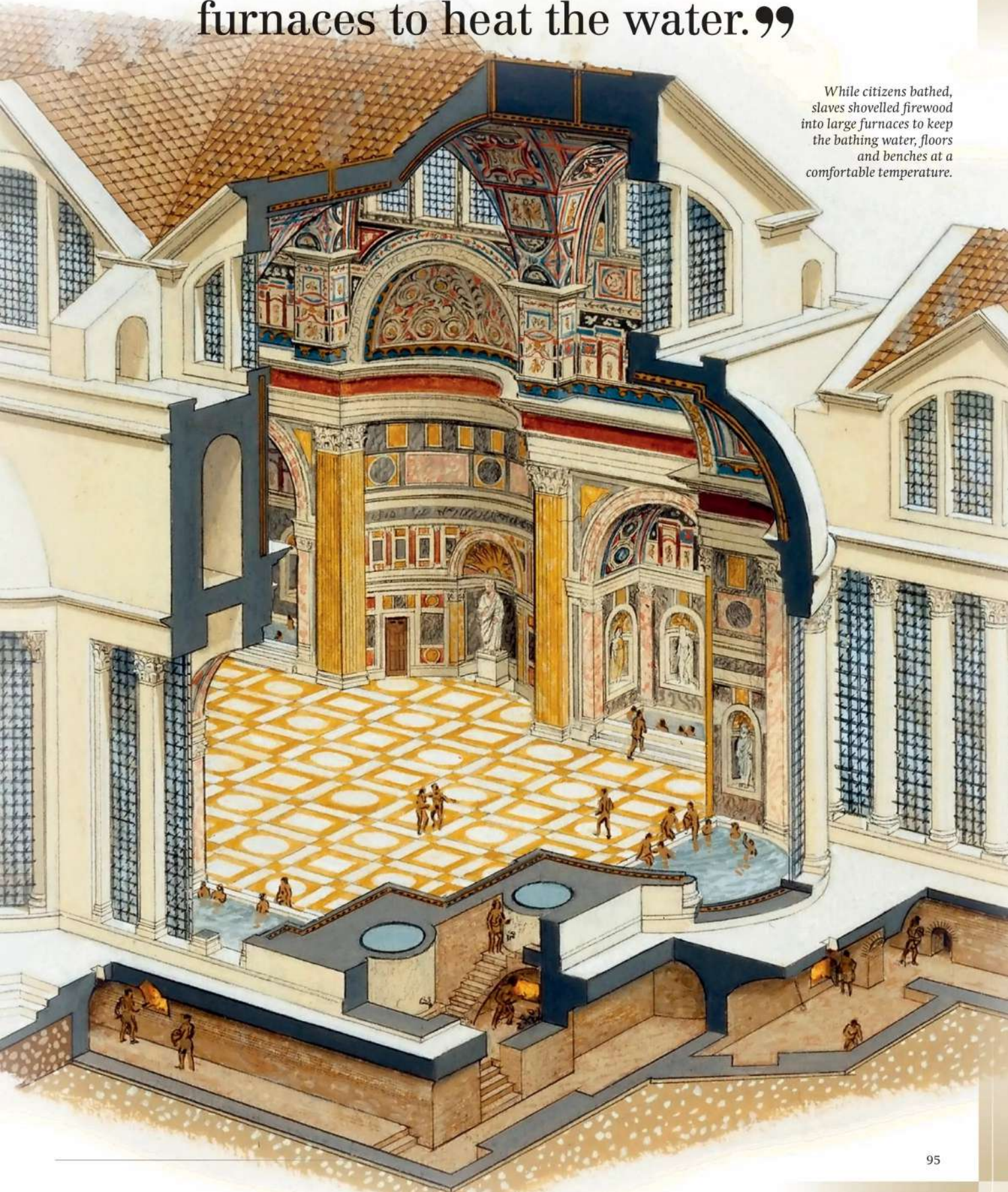
Rome's first emperor – The man behind the Pax Romana – Ruled for 41 years





“During the baths, slaves fed furnaces to heat the water.”

While citizens bathed, slaves shovelled firewood into large furnaces to keep the bathing water, floors and benches at a comfortable temperature.





“The Colosseum had its own aqueduct so the Romans could flood the arena to stage naval battles for entertainment.”

>>> century BC, marble was used only sparingly – for example, when the wealthy built monuments. That’s because it was an expensive material that had to be transported from the Greek provinces.

However, under Augustus, who took power in 27 BC, the Romans discovered a plentiful and cheap supply of marble in Carrara, in present-day Tuscany. It enabled Augustus to transform Rome from a dirty, chaotic mess to a city gleaming with marble, one worthy to rule an empire. The

*Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace), the Pantheon and a new temple to Apollo were just some of the fruits of the construction boom.

And Augustus – renowned for his theatre – was fully

prepared to take the credit. On his deathbed he reportedly said, “I found a Rome of bricks; I leave to you one of marble.”

#### COLOSSEUM PREVENTED QUEUING

In the first century AD, during the empire’s golden age known as *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), Roman building works flourished, and the Emperor Vespasian ordered the construction of the largest amphitheatre the empire had ever seen. He gathered all available engineering knowledge together and the architects set about devising solutions to two major problems: first, how could they erect such a huge edifice without it collapsing under its own – and the spectators’ – weight? And second, how would fifty thousand spectators be able to get into and out of the stands without creating lengthy queues and congestion?

The Romans had previously built amphitheatres from wood, which had collapsed – in one case, killing several thousand spectators. Vespasian therefore wanted the Colosseum built in

stone and concrete. The heavy materials made the first problem even more acute.

Architects picked out a lake six metres deep as the building site. First, large pipes drained it of water before thousands of



Going to the loo was a social activity for Romans, with women and men sitting together in rows. These latrines were found in the South of France.

slaves dug out another thirty thousand tonnes of soil to create a hole 12 metres deep. Into this the Romans then cast a concrete foundation, which ensured the building wouldn’t sink.

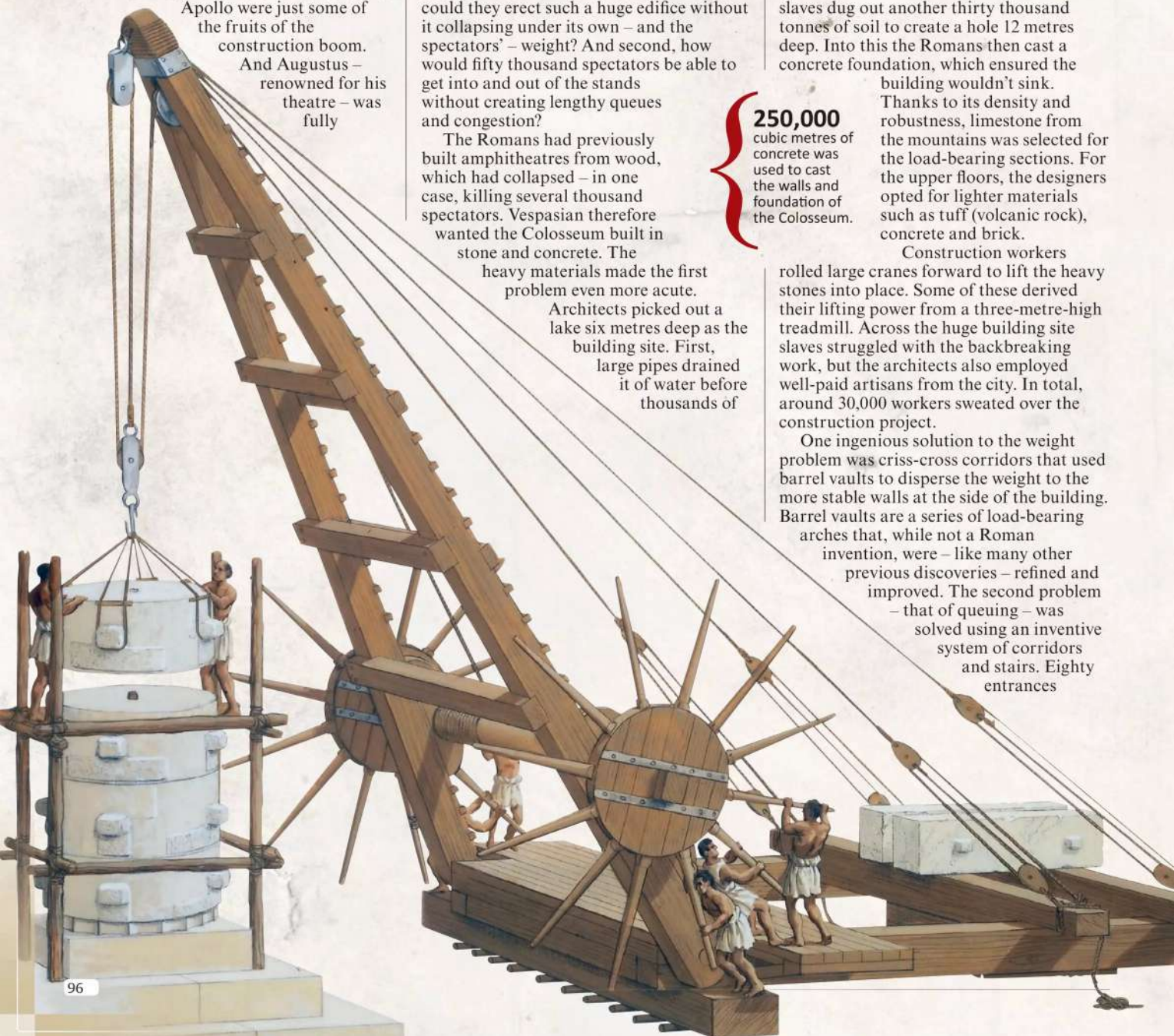
Thanks to its density and robustness, limestone from the mountains was selected for the load-bearing sections. For the upper floors, the designers opted for lighter materials such as tuff (volcanic rock), concrete and brick.

Construction workers rolled large cranes forward to lift the heavy stones into place. Some of these derived their lifting power from a three-metre-high treadmill. Across the huge building site slaves struggled with the backbreaking work, but the architects also employed well-paid artisans from the city. In total, around 30,000 workers sweated over the construction project.

One ingenious solution to the weight problem was criss-cross corridors that used barrel vaults to disperse the weight to the more stable walls at the side of the building. Barrel vaults are a series of load-bearing arches that, while not a Roman

invention, were – like many other previous discoveries – refined and improved. The second problem – that of queuing – was solved using an inventive system of corridors and stairs. Eighty entrances

**250,000**  
cubic metres of concrete was used to cast the walls and foundation of the Colosseum.





allowed people to swiftly reach the stairwells. Carefully numbered seats, entrances and sections ensured a smooth, efficient system.

#### COLOSSEUM STAGED NAVAL BATTLES

After five years of work, the Colosseum was completed in AD 80. The world's largest amphitheatre and the largest public building in Rome's history had 52-metre-high exterior walls – the equivalent of a modern 17-storey house – and could accommodate fifty thousand spectators. The arena was inaugurated with a hundred-day long bloodthirsty set of gladiatorial games, in which spectators watched as one thousand people and nine thousand wild animals were killed.

The massive Colosseum even had its own aqueduct so the Romans could flood the arena to stage naval battles for entertainment. The Colosseum thus united an ostentatious, impressive building through which the emperor could gain prestige, with the practical, technical purpose of constructing an arena for an unprecedented number of spectators.

The same combination of function and aesthetics was demonstrated in many other aspects of Roman engineering and architecture. For example, the famous bridges over otherwise impassable rivers that brought troops to battle opened Europe to the Romans and secured the reigning emperor fame. Likewise, the many examples of military inventions: complex machines to besiege opponents, including the powerful *ballista* to fire arrows, the specialist *onager* siege engine and a huge attack ramp protected by a mobile shelter called a *testudo* (tortoise).

And then there was Hadrian – the emperor who had the architect Apollodorus executed. He was far from discouraged by Apollodorus's criticism; instead, he played a part in creating the Pantheon itself – a temple not just to one god, but to all the Roman gods. In fact, the temple had been built by the equally architecturally enthusiastic emperor Augustus, but Hadrian was responsible for its extensive reconstruction, which included the addition of the temple's famous dome cast in concrete. Hadrian experimented with new forms, and the Pantheon's construction was of such high quality that it's the most well-preserved of all Ancient Rome's surviving buildings.

Why? Because when any Roman built, whether humble architect or mighty emperor, they built to last. It was a matter of life or death. ■

Roman cranes were probably inspired by Greek models and were used to stack heavy building blocks.

## ROMAN STRUCTURES STILL STAND

*The Romans ended the angular architecture of earlier times with new Etruscan-inspired arches and domes. Innovation didn't come at the expense of quality, however. Two millennia of rain, heat and war haven't been able to destroy the Roman superstructures.*



### PANTHEON

#### FIRST DOMED ROOF

■ Emperor Hadrian's Pantheon, built between AD 118 and 125, was the Romans' first major monument with an entirely domed roof. Its diameter is as wide as the height of the walls that support it: 43.4 metres. The Pantheon – Greek for "all gods" – later became a Christian church.

### GUADALQUIVIR BRIDGE

#### ROMAN ARCHES

■ The Romans overcame the torrent from the longest river in the Iberian Peninsula, the Guadalquivir, using structures such as the Córdoba Bridge. 16 arches distributed the weight across both natural banks and artificial foundations in the river. The 247-metre-long bridge over the Guadalquivir is still in use today.



### CONSTANTINE'S TRIUMPHAL ARCH

#### SYMBOLS OF VICTORY

■ Roman architecture didn't simply provide practical solutions to practical problems. Arches could carry bridges and arenas, but they could also symbolise victories. One example was Emperor Constantine's triumphal arch: 21 metres high and erected in AD 315 to celebrate victory over Maxentius, his former co-emperor, three years earlier.

### THE COLOSSEUM

#### SUPER ARENA

■ After the empire's fall, the Colosseum was used as a quarry for centuries, and wild plants flourished. But 19th-century archaeologists dug the arena free, so that today it reigns once more over the centre of Rome.











# DEATH MATCH IN THE ARENA

264 BC-AD 410

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Heroism, excitement and death. Roman gladiatorial battles contained all the elements spectators required for their amusement, and the public revelled in the deadly entertainment. From a simple burial ritual in the city's cattle market, gladiatorial battles developed into bloody amusement for the masses and a means of political propaganda for Rome's rulers. At the centre of it all were the gladiators, who fought ruthlessly to escape the arena with their lives.



## 264 BC-AD 410

264 BC

The first recorded gladiatorial battle is held as a funeral ritual.

65 BC

Caesar organises a celebration with 320 gladiator fights.

AD 80

The empire's largest gladiatorial arena, the Colosseum, is inaugurated.

AD 325

Emperor Constantine bans the games, which continue nevertheless.



At the funeral of the Roman nobleman Publius Licinius Crassus in 183 BC, the guests gorged themselves on fried meat and were entertained by games and chariot racing during the three-day wake. The celebration's biggest hit, however, was the gladiator fights – using swords, tridents and other deadly weapons, highly trained slaves battled against each other. The crowd's eyes eagerly followed each blow, and a joyful shudder rippled through the stands as a gladiator's weapon cut into his opponent's flesh.

"The funeral scene in 183 BC was far from unusual for the Romans. Gladiatorial fights had originated in an earlier burial ritual, in which someone was sacrificed to honour the deceased: "[F]ormerly, in the belief that the souls of the departed were appeased by human blood, [people] were in the habit of buying captives or slaves of wicked disposition, and immolating them in their funeral obsequies. Afterwards ... [t]hose ... whom they had provided for the combat, and then trained in arms as best they could, only that they might learn to die, they, on the funeral day, killed at the places of sepulture," said the theologian Tertullian, who lived AD 160-220.

After the earliest reported gladiatorial games at the funeral of aristocrat Decimus

Junius Brutus Pera in 264 BC, the phenomenon exploded in

popularity. At that time, three *bustuarii* (men who fought at funeral pyres) occupied the arena in a modest location in Rome, the Forum Boarium cattle market. At the funeral of the religious head Publius Licinius Crassus 80 years later, 120 muscle-bound gladiators fought before thousands of spectators. The fights had become popular entertainment for the masses.

## CONTEMPT AND PRAISE

From time to time, Romans criticised the brutal gladiatorial battles. For example, the statesman and philosopher Cicero called gladiators "barbarians, or the very dregs of mankind" because they were recruited from criminals or prisoners of war captured in the Roman conquests. But in general, the Romans, who worshiped masculinity with an almost religious fervour, flocked to watch the murderous spectacles, and proclaimed gladiators to be brave heroes.

Combat was an accepted part of life.

The majority of gladiators were slaves forced to take part in the death matches, but some were volunteers. They were often unemployed and in hopeless debt. Others volunteered in order to avoid military service, which could consume more than 20 years of their lives. Every gladiator, however, was branded by Roman society as *infamia* – in disgrace – on a par with prostitutes. A gladiator had no right to vote, serve in the army, or testify in court.

## GLADIATORS TRAINED HARD

New gladiators were sent to one of the kingdom's many gladiatorial schools,

known as a *ludus*. Here they practised day in, day out, following a rigorous programme to train them in tough discipline and equip them with the requisite skills in weapons' use and melee combat.

In the introductory lessons, gladiatorial students fought against a *pallus*, a 172-centimetre-high wooden pole knocked into the ground that represented an opponent. With a wooden sword, the student practised a variety of manoeuvres according to a set pattern.

"The recruit ... sometimes aim[ed] at the head or face, sometimes at the sides, at others endeavouring to strike at the thighs or legs. He was instructed in what manner to advance and retire, and in short how to take every advantage of his adversary," wrote the Roman author and military expert Vegetius about the training.

After the initial lessons, the recruit had to fight another man using a wooden weapon, and only when the exercises were perfect were the trainees equipped with real weapons and set to fight each other in the school arena.

The *ludus* was not only a school, but also the gladiators' home, where they lived when their owner wasn't renting them out for performances. Some gladiators could move freely outside the school in the evening, but for most, the days offered only hard training and virtually no privacy. The toughest criminal recruits were put in chains straight after the day's exercises.

As slaves, the gladiators weren't allowed to marry, but some of

15,000

sesterces: the cost of a prize gladiator. The cheapest could be bought for 1,000.



HERMES, FIRST CENTURY

## PRIZE GLADIATOR WITH SEX APPEAL

■ "[F]avourite fighter of the age." This is how the Roman poet Martial described the gladiator Hermes, who lived in the latter half of the first century. Unusually, Hermes mastered not just one but three weapons – the spear, the trident and the sword – and he taught students at the gladiatorial school. In the arena, the fighter defeated even the toughest opponents, such as the infamous gladiators Helius

and Advolans. Hermes became well known for winning matches without killing his opponent. As the arena's big draw, he was a gold mine for ticket sellers, who could push up prices whenever Hermes was on the programme. According to Martial, the female audience, in particular, went weak for the prize gladiator. "Hermes, darling and distress of gladiators' women," wrote the poet.

Rome's most successful gladiator – Mastered three weapons – Made famous by the poet Martial



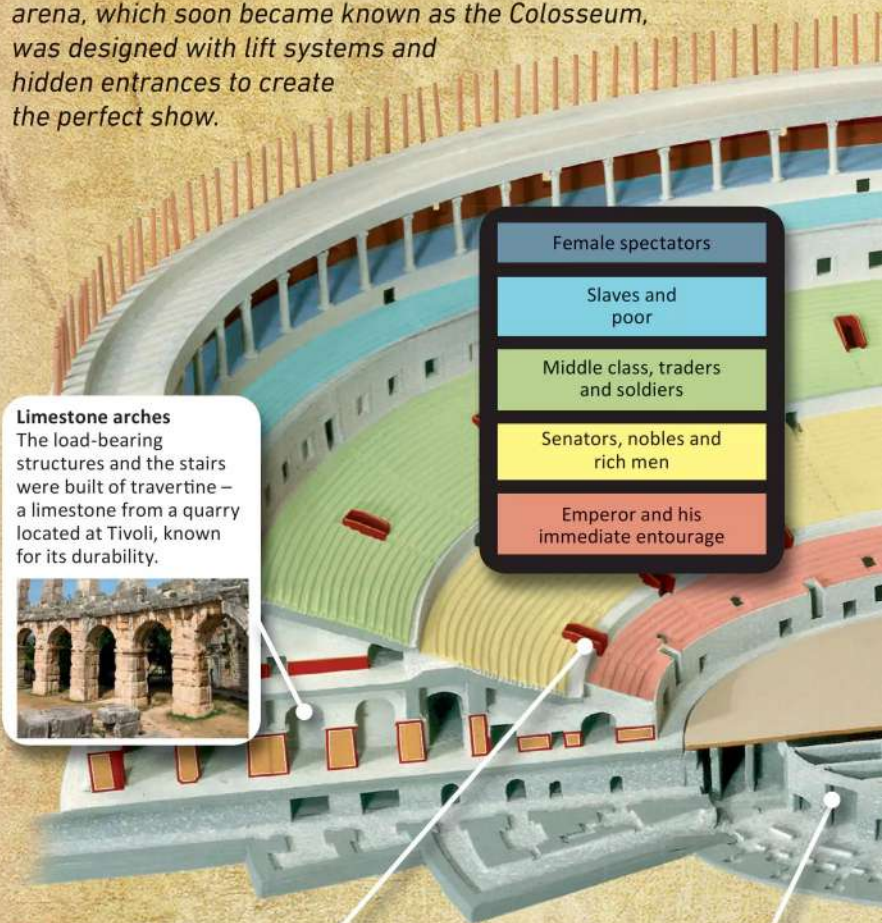


*Freed former  
gladiators often  
appeared as judges  
in the arena.*



# COLOSSEUM WAS

*In AD 72, Emperor Vespasian decided to build a giant amphitheatre. Eight years later, his son and successor, Titus, welcomed the citizens of Rome to the largest gladiatorial stadium in world history, the Flavian Amphitheatre. The arena, which soon became known as the Colosseum, was designed with lift systems and hidden entrances to create the perfect show.*



## Limestone arches

The load-bearing structures and the stairs were built of travertine – a limestone from a quarry located at Tivoli, known for its durability.



## Exits

To lead 50,000 spectators in and out of the stadium, the Colosseum's architects devised a series of passages distributed among the audience seats. After the performance, people poured out of the exits, which became known as *vomitaria* – vomiters.

## Underground chambers

Beneath the arena, Emperor Domitian built a level with various chambers and corridors, where the gladiators stayed between battles. This area, where no sunlight could penetrate, also housed the animals and condemned criminals.



they lived with a woman and their children at the school. The ancient historian Plutarch mentioned that the famous rebel slave Spartacus, for example, had a female companion at his school in Capua. The conditions at the *ludus* were austere and uncomfortable. From excavations in Pompeii, we know that two-man cells at the city's gladiatorial school measured between just three and five square metres. Archaeologists have found no trace of beds, indicating that the men were forced to sleep on rough mattresses on the floor.

The food was foul, too, not least the daily dish of *miscellanea* – a concoction of cheap but nutritious barley.

## POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

Gladiatorial schools were usually owned by a retired gladiator, who now made a living by hiring out his fighters for performances. The owners enjoyed the same lowly status in society as slave traders or pimps.

Their social standing, however, was amply offset by the opportunity to earn a fortune at the fights. As the games' popularity grew, the price of gladiators rose sharply; being slaves, however, the gladiators themselves weren't paid, so the money went straight into their owners' pockets. Rich and powerful Romans were apparently willing to pay anything to put on an impressive show. In 160 BC, the bereaved family of army commander Lucius Aemilius Paullus spent the sum of 30 talents on gladiatorial fights for the funeral, the equivalent of 1,500 soldiers' annual salary or half the deceased's estate.

Spectacular performances like this did honour the deceased, but they were also an excellent opportunity to draw attention to the benefactor. No one saw this more clearly than the ambitious Julius Caesar, who owned a *ludus* with about 1,000 gladiators, and staged huge performances to garner votes. In 65 BC, he invited Roman citizens to as many as 320 gladiatorial battles, which, according to historians, lasted 15-20 days. Officially, the celebration was in honour of Caesar's deceased father, but as he'd died 15 years earlier, it seems clear that the spectacle was really in aid of Caesar's own political ambitions.

As the number of politically motivated performances escalated, legislators sought to put a damper on proceedings by setting a ceiling on the number of gladiators, as well as a time frame for funeral performances.

## POWER SHOWN THROUGH THE ARENA

Regulation, however, could not stop the popular spectacles. Rome's political leaders could tell that the bloody battles were a hit with the citizens, so the organisers turned up the pomp and splendour of the performances to highlight the empire's power and strength.

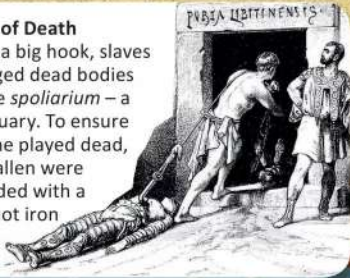
Emperors bought their own gladiatorial schools, where the slaves received better food and treatment in order to help them perform better, but the rulers still feared that their political rivals would outdo them with their own private games. Therefore,



# BUILT FOR DEATH

## Gate of Death

With a big hook, slaves dragged dead bodies to the *spoliarium* – a mortuary. To ensure no one played dead, the fallen were prodded with a red-hot iron rod.



## Sunshade over seats

Gladiatorial performances took place in the spring and summer months. To protect the audience from the sun, sailors on loan from the navy stretched a canopy between the arena's 240 poles.



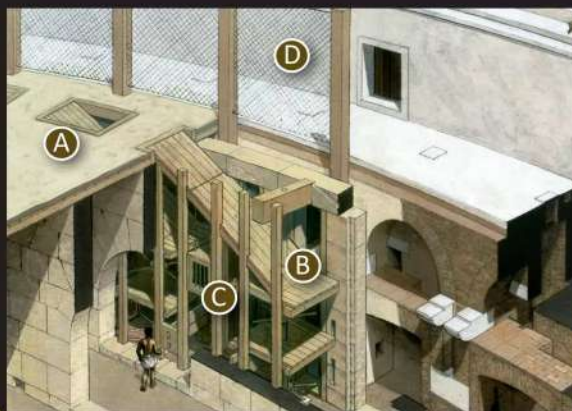
**Arena:** The 3,357-m<sup>2</sup> floor was laid with wooden planks, probably of oak, and sprinkled with sand.

## Statues

The alcoves on the upper floors were adorned with 160 statues of gods and emperors.

## VAULTS DESIGNED FOR SURPRISE ATTACKS

While the spectators gasped or held their breath, with their eyes glued to the horrors in the arena, preparations continued underground. Fresh gladiators and animals were waiting to surprise the crowd.



**A** Through hidden lifts in the floor, gladiators and wild beasts could appear behind an unsuspecting fighter when the spectators least expected it. Surprise attacks were a sure favourite with the audience. Slaves beneath the arena floor worked on the timing for the new opponent's entrance.

**B** Ramps led gladiators and the condemned from the vaults to the arena.

**C** Lifts hoisted animals into the arena. Slaves worked the primitive mechanisms.

**D** A net was stretched out around the arena to prevent the wild animals from reaching the four-metre wall in front of the stands.

## COLOSSEUM IN NUMBERS

Year built ..... AD 80  
Dimensions..... 189 x 156 m  
Arena area ..... 3,357 m<sup>2</sup>  
Entrances..... 76  
Height ..... 52 m  
Staff ..... 25,000  
Spectators ..... 50,000  
Last show ..... AD 523



To start with, gladiators were called *bustuarii* because they fought at a funeral pyre, *bustum*. Later, they were named after their sword, the *gladius*.

Emperor Augustus decreed that individuals could arrange a maximum of two performances a year, each with 60 gladiators. The emperor also promised to hold at least one major tournament for his citizens every year. Under emperors Caligula and Claudius, the battles took shape according to a programme that was to form the blueprint for all later gladiatorial games.

#### WILD ANIMALS APPEARED

Roman citizens made their way to the stands in the morning. From there, they could look out over the arena and watch the first matches of the day, where lions, tigers, bears and other exotic animals from Rome's provinces were herded into the ring to fight a gladiator. Animals had long been a regular part of the performances, but originally they were simply put on display to enthral the audience. For example, when Caesar triumphantly presented a giraffe before a gladiatorial battle, it elicited great cheers. Only after AD 1 was the animal show replaced by regular battles of man versus beast. Equipped with weapons and deft moves, the gladiator tried to defeat the wild animals, which had been starved prior to the show. A single mistake was fatal.

"And if [the gladiator] is not good enough to escape from a wild animal, he will not be able to have a proper burial; with the man still alive, his body perishes and [...] it is savagely eaten. The spectacle

## "The emperor ordered Faustina to bathe in the blood of the gladiator, then make love to the corpse"

[...] is horrible to an unimaginable degree," was the description by the Gothic ruler Theodoric to the consul Maximus around the year 500.

But even the animal fights couldn't satisfy the bloodthirsty audience. Many Romans remained in their seats during the lunch break so as not to miss the cruellest event of the day: the execution of convicts, where executioners killed criminals in the most torturous and humiliating ways. To the audience's great horror, prisoners were strung up between four horses and torn apart when the animals were whipped and forced to run. Others were doused in flammable liquid and ignited like living torches. The worst offenders were executed *ad bestias* – thrown to the wild beasts.

Unlike the morning's fights against animals, the convicts were equipped with neither weapons nor armour, but entered the arena defenceless to face the beasts. This awful form of execution was particularly common for early Christians, because the Romans considered it an especially heinous crime not to recognise their own gods. These public executions served as an effective deterrent, as well as

entertainment. The Romans had no police force as such, so used the cruel punishments to demonstrate to the public that the state cracked down hard on crime, and took care of justice and the security of its citizens.

#### GLADIATORS WERE IDOLS

The highlight of the day was the afternoon's gladiator fights – man against man. Whistles and cheers resounded from the stands, where Romans fought for the best seats as the gladiators entered the arena and lined up in front of the emperor with the words: "We who are about to die salute you." A typical day's programme comprised 12 matches – first on horseback, then on foot.

Armed with swords, tridents, nets, spears and daggers, the gladiators had to attack their opponents – possibly comrades from the *ludus* – knowing that only one of them would be leaving alive. To vary the performances, the organisers pitted gladiators using different weapons, armour and fighting style against each other. The spectators cheered eagerly as their favourite gladiator attacked and wounded their opponent. Some gladiators enjoyed star status, like modern-day football players, and even had loyal fan clubs. Archaeologists have found clay

### SWORD VERSUS TRIDENT

Romans could expect to see a number of types of gladiator – each with their own specific weapons, armour and attire. The warriors were paired up in whatever way would create the most thrills for the crowd.

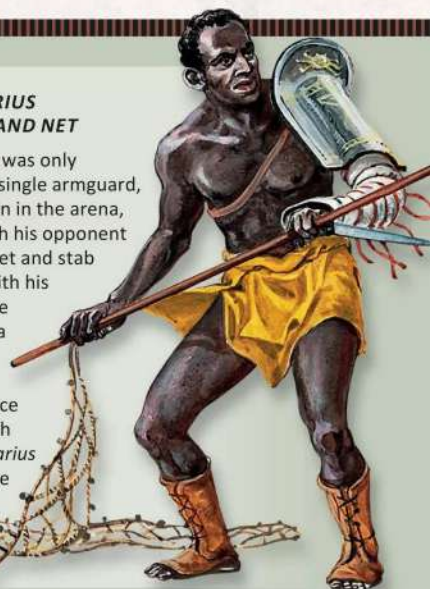
#### NAME: THRAEX KIT: CURVED SWORD

■ The *thraex* was originally a prisoner of war from Thrace. In the arena, the Thracians fought with a short, curved sword and a small shield called a *parmula*. Armour protected their legs and their helmet featured a griffin. The mythical beast, with eagle's head and lion's body, symbolised the goddess of retribution, Nemesis – the protective god of gladiators.



#### NAME: RETIARIUS KIT: TRIDENT AND NET

■ The *retiarius* was only protected by a single armguard, a *galerus*. To win in the arena, he tried to catch his opponent in a weighted net and stab him to death with his trident. Because he didn't wear a helmet and the spectators could see his face during the death match, the *retiarius* was an audience favourite.





figures of gladiators and oil lamps bearing motifs from the battles, which they believe served as merchandise.

In the women's seats, Roman ladies swooned over the well-trained warriors, as evidenced by the author Tertullian, who described them as "those most loving gladiators, to whom men prostitute their souls, women too their bodies". Certain gladiators seemed to be fully aware of their female fans. Archaeologists have found inscriptions in Pompeii in which a gladiator called himself "the one whom girls sigh for" and "the one whom girls honour".

The gladiators' sex appeal gave them admission to noble women's bedrooms. The affair of Eppia, a senator's wife, with the gladiator Sergiolus is described in detail by the Roman satirist Juvenal, who lived around the year 100.

"A scar caused by the helmet, a huge wen upon his nose, a nasty humour always trickling from his eye. But then he was a gladiator! It is this that transforms these fellows into Hyacinths! ... What these women love is the sword," noted the author, who also recounted how, in jealousy, Emperor Marcus Aurelius had a gladiator executed simply because his wife, Faustina, felt sexually attracted to him. The episode ended with the emperor ordering Faustina to bathe in the gladiator's blood and then make love to the corpse. According to Juvenal's dubious conclusion to the story, Marcus Aurelius's successor – the diabolical emperor Commodus – was conceived during the act.

#### CROWD VOTED

Gaining the audience's admiration wasn't just about being famous. For a gladiator, having followers could mean the difference between life and death. While some battles were fought *sine missione* – to the death – others allowed the loser to be set free. But first, the organiser of the games would consult the crowd. With

shouts of "*Missum, missum*" – "Release him, release him" – spectators indicated that they wanted the gladiator to survive. But most of the audience would strike their thumb against the opposite palm, while shouting "*Iugula*" – "Cut their throat" – to demonstrate that they wanted the loser to die. The organiser didn't have to appeal to the audience, but did so to win the people's favour. If the crowd sentenced a gladiator to death, he had to lay his head obediently on the block and be beheaded. Even in that moment, however, he could still earn glory if he met his death heroically. The winner was rewarded with palm leaves, laurel wreaths and money, three quarters of which ended up in their owner's purse.

If a gladiator proved to be particularly talented, he could, with the crowd's support, be set free and no longer have to risk his life in the arena. The ticket to freedom was a wooden stick called a *rudis*, and the gladiator could now boast of being *summarudis* – a former first-class gladiator. Many ex-gladiators trained new recruits or became judges at matches.

For most, however, a gladiator's career meant a harsh life, with death just around the corner.

#### COULDN'T AFFORD GAMES

In the year 325, the Christian Emperor Constantine I

Roman philosopher Seneca/AD 50

#### EYEWITNESS

#### GLADIATOR BATTLE



"[I]t is pure murder. The men have no defensive armour. ... [T]here is no helmet or shield to deflect the weapon. What is the need of defensive armour, or of skill? All these mean delaying death. In the morning they throw men to the lions and the bears; at noon, they throw them to the spectators. The spectators demand that the slayer shall face the man who is to slay him in his turn; and they always reserve the latest conqueror for another butchering. ... In the morning they cried "Kill Him! Lash him! Burn him!"

banned gladiator games, and criticism of the atrocities began to circulate. But the average Roman – Christian or not – took little notice of the censorious voices and continued attending matches.

Fewer and fewer games were held, however, because the elite had difficulty raising the funds to put on such costly performances. The fourth-century German invasions sent a number of Roman provinces into economic disaster. And in AD 410, the Visigoth King Alaric plundered Rome. The Colosseum's last wild beast show was held in 523. The fall of the Roman Empire also marked the end of 700 years of brutal entertainment. ■

#### NAME: EQUES KIT: HORSE AND SPEAR

■ *Eques* fought with spears on horseback – rider against rider. Protected by a helmet with a visor, arm guard and round shield, the goal was to hit the opponent on the first attempt. Once the spear was thrown, the gladiator had to dismount and continue on foot with his sword. *Eques* kicked off the day's gladiator games.

#### NAME: MURMILLO KIT: SHIELD AND SWORD

■ The *murmillo* was recognised by his helmet, with a large crest. His long shield, the *scutum*, was almost as tall as a man, and its curvature provided extra protection around the body. In turn, the shield was heavy and required endurance. In the arena, the *scutum* and *parmula* each had their own fan base. Emperor Domitian was a dedicated *scutarri* – a fan of the large shield.











# BARBARIANS AT THE CITY GATE

235-476

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Two centuries of internal strife and constant attacks by warrior peoples and Germanic tribes slowly but brutally tore the once mighty Roman Empire apart.

As the barbarians flowed across the borders and emptied the treasury with their looting, the Roman Empire broke in two. Eventually, Germanic leaders reached the heart of the empire, plundered the city of Rome and divided the entire western

half of the Roman Empire  
among themselves.



LEGIO X







## 235-476

|                                                                                         |                                                                     |                                                                              |                                                              |                                                                         |                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>235</b><br>A period of internal strife begins as Germanic tribes attack the borders. | <b>293</b> Emperor Diocletian tries to divide the empire into four. | <b>395</b> The empire is divided into the Eastern and Western Roman Empires. | <b>410</b> Visigoth king, Alaric, invades and plunders Rome. | <b>451</b> Attila, ruler of the Huns, attacks the Western Roman Empire. | <b>476</b> The Western Roman Empire finally collapses. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|

235 >>> 293 >>> 395 >>> 410 >>> 451 >>> 476 >>>

**A**t the turn of the year AD 409, Rome's streets were thick with the stench of starved people, who lay between the city's densely packed houses.

Infectious diseases were spreading among the living, who had to make do with food rations that had been cut to a third. The citizens were dying in their thousands. Outside the city walls, a 30,000-strong army under the command of the Visigoth king, Alaric, was patrolling. On the Tiber, Goth ships ensured that no supplies made their way into the besieged city.

Alaric had threatened to do something that, until a few years previously, had been unthinkable: he would invade, plunder and ravage Rome if his demands for a new homeland for the Gothic tribes were not met.

No enemy army had been able to threaten Rome since the Gallic king, Brennus, had attacked the city almost 800 years earlier, when Rome was just one of many small Italian city-states. Nevertheless, Alaric's threat was all too real. The city didn't have a proper army, and Emperor Honorius, who ruled the kingdom of Ravenna on the east coast of Italy, had no desire to come to the rescue. His power was being threatened by the army commander Constantine, who had proclaimed himself Western Roman Emperor. If Honorius threw his legions into battle against Alaric's giant Goth

army, Constantine would undoubtedly take advantage of the situation and seize power. Honorius was prepared to relinquish Rome if he couldn't outwit Alaric.

### EMPEROR WAS A MOUNTING BLOCK

For an explanation of how the once mighty Rome could end up in the clutches of a foreign invading army, one must look back at least a century and a half earlier.

The third century was almost one long crisis for the Romans. A long line of incompetent emperors had seemingly ruled in shifts – as many as 23 in the years 235-284 – while Rome's provinces had suffered constant border attacks. In 251, Gothic tribes broke through the Danube's defences in the Balkans and killed the emperor, Decius. A few years later, Emperor Valerian was captured by the Persians, whose king literally used him as a mounting block for his horse.

In 259, two Germanic tribes reached all the way into Italy itself. The following year, a group of Franks broke through the Rhine's defences and rampaged through Gaul and down the Iberian Peninsula before the Romans defeated them.

From 270 to 275, the warrior emperor Aurelian recaptured virtually all the territories that his predecessors had lost, but he couldn't put an end to the internal battles for imperial power

**The Franks** put a price on every member of the tribe according to their proficiency at war.



In Ravenna, the Goths built a mausoleum in memory of Theodoric the Great, who ruled Italy after the fall of Rome in the late 400s.

or hide the unpleasant truth: the Roman Empire was more fragile than ever.

While the Romans used to be able to pay for wars with the booty from their many conquests, these defensive wars had to be financed with taxes, which sent large sections of the population into extreme poverty. Successive emperors tried to compensate for the shortage of money by alloying gold and silver coins with cheaper metals. The result was galloping inflation.

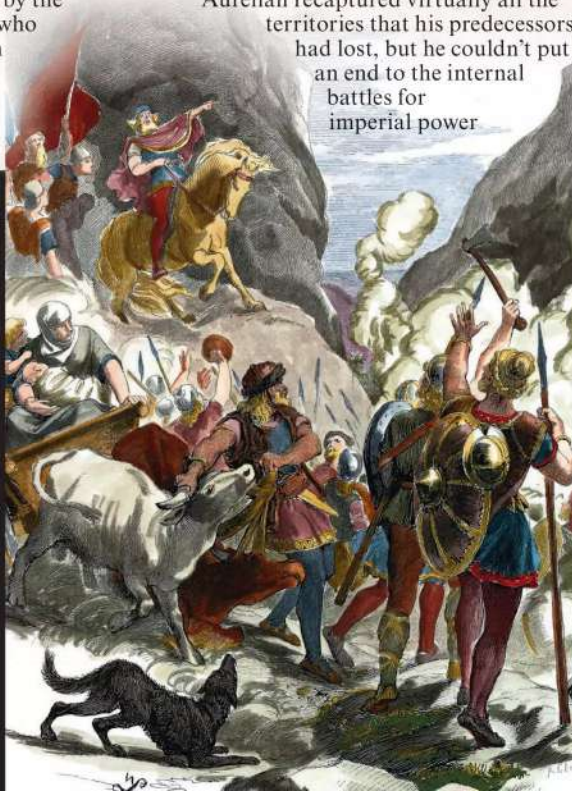
### DIOCLETIAN DIVIDED THE EMPIRE

The man who temporarily ended the turbulent period of ever-changing rulers was Emperor Diocletian, who came to power in 284. It's unlikely that he managed to get inflation under control, but he did prove to be an unusually active and gifted administrator – perhaps the empire's greatest since Emperor Augustus. To prevent ambitious generals attempting to elevate themselves to emperors, Diocletian brought the army under central command and gave soldiers better pay and equipment.

His most far-reaching reform came into force in 293: the emperor split the unruly empire into four parts. Two co-emperors and two junior co-emperors would in future share power and rule from four new administrative centres sited close to the

## CONQUERORS OF ROME

*Most of Rome's enemies were Germanic peoples from northern and eastern Europe in search of a better life. However, the dreaded equestrian warriors of the Huns probably originated from Asia's vast steppes.*



### HUNS ►

■ The Huns were warlike nomads from the Asian plains. They were superb riders and archers, and their bloody invasion from the east sent the Goths fleeing to the Roman Empire. Under the warrior king Attila, the Huns established a huge empire north-east of the borders of the Roman Empire. From there, Attila first invaded the Eastern Roman Empire and then Italy. After his death, the Hun kingdom fell apart.

### ◀ GOTHS

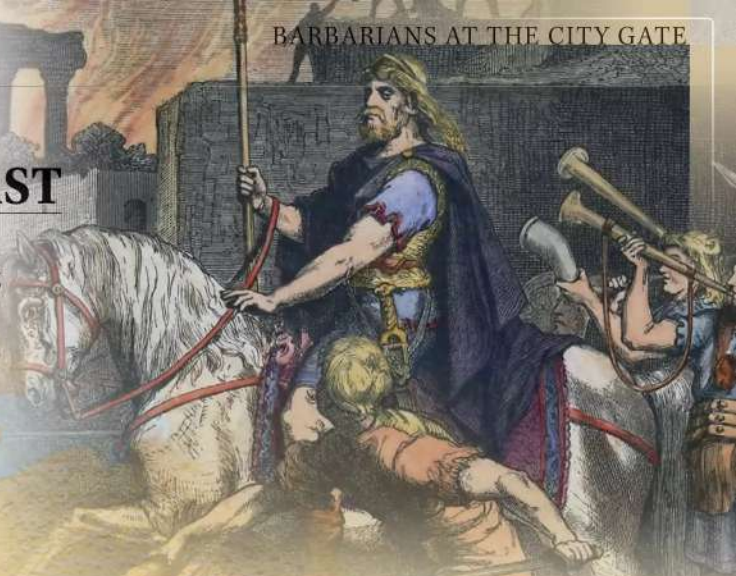
■ Gothic tribes invaded the Roman Empire from their settlements on the Black Sea and formed the backbone of the multi-tribal invasion that broke the Western Roman Empire. Some of their greatest leaders had learned Roman war tactics as soldiers fighting for Rome. Early on, the Goths were divided into Ostrogoths and Visigoths, and



## TRIBES CAME FROM THE EAST



Invaders slowly caused the Roman Empire to crumble. Hordes of Germanic tribes, in particular, travelled enormous distances in search of food and increased prosperity, while occasionally settling for a period, fighting each other or entering into alliances with both the Romans and other raiders.



Visigothic chief Alaric was the first to threaten to invade the city of Rome for more than 700 years.



The Huns bound their babies' heads so the skull became elongated.

later founded several of the stable states that characterised medieval Europe, such as the Visigothic Kingdom of Spain.

### VANDALS

Along with the Goths, the Vandals were the most successful of the Germanic peoples, which also included the Franks and Saxons. The Vandals had roots in present-day eastern Germany and conquered large tracts of land in Europe and North Africa, before establishing themselves in present-day Tunisia. Known for their cruelty in battle, in a deadly war with the Byzantine Empire – heir to the eastern half of the Roman Empire – the Vandals allegedly chopped 500 prisoners into pieces. Historians, however, doubt whether the Vandals were as bad as their reputation. There is much to suggest that their success was rooted in their ability to adapt to their environment.

### FRANKS

The Franks originally lived in western Germany, and a large number fought for the Romans for a long time against other Germanic tribes. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Frankish kings took power in Gaul with great success, and a direct line runs through the history of Europe from the first kingdoms of the Franks to present-day France.

### SAXONS

The Saxons were a warrior people who probably originated in north-western Germany on the rivers Elbe and Weser. The Romans referred to the earliest Saxons as wretched pirates who made life miserable for the northernmost outposts of the Roman Empire in Britannia, present-day Britain. When the Romans lost control of the island, Saxons flocked there and established small kingdoms.



“ The Goth chief  
had both  
infantry and a  
powerful cavalry ”

*This relief dates from the second century AD  
when barbarians had begun to threaten the  
Roman Empire's borders.*



>>>> empire's borders and the increasing threat of invading enemies.

In 305, Diocletian was the first and only Roman emperor to abdicate voluntarily, in the hope of creating a system that would permanently replace civil war and power struggles with peace and stability – but his hopes were soon dashed. In the following years, the empire's four rulers fought at least as much with each other as with Rome's external enemies.

The self-obsessed emperor Constantine the Great briefly united the whole empire from his new city of government, Constantinople, on the Bosphorus, but it was repeatedly divided and united until in 395 it broke into an Eastern Roman Empire and a Western Roman Empire. The border now ran down the middle of the Balkans and North Africa.

### BIGGEST DEFEAT IN YEARS

By the time the empire was split in two, a fresh wave of attacks had long been battering the borders. The Persian warrior king Shapur attacked in the east, and Germanic tribes constantly threatened in the north. From about the year 375, the Huns, perhaps the most fearsome of all the peoples to the north of the empire's borders, thundered into present-day Ukraine and Romania from their homeland on the steppes of Central Asia.

The masterful mounted archers forced several Gothic tribes to leave their settlements on the Black Sea, and thus the Huns created the greatest refugee crisis in antiquity. Up to 200,000 Goth men, women and children

sought refuge behind the protective borders of the Roman Empire. Other Gothic tribes, later known collectively as the Ostrogoths, remained for a time and were subjugated by the Huns to the north-east of the empire.

Unnerved by the enormous number of Goth refugees, the Eastern Roman emperor, Valens, let the Visigoths, as the refugee tribes were collectively called, cross the Danube and encamp between the sparsely populated Roman border posts. All winter, the Visigoths froze and starved in their refugee camp. But instead of helping, Roman soldiers took advantage of the crisis and forced the Goths to sell their children as slaves in exchange for rotten dog meat. Later, the Romans even tried to assassinate the Goths' leaders.

The Romans' deceit ignited the anger of the Visigoth chief Fritigern, who led a revolt. Accompanied by mercenaries recruited from among the Goths' old enemies, the Huns, he stormed down through the Balkans in 377.

Emperor Valens was at war with the Persian Empire to the east, but hurriedly made peace with the Persian king in order to free up troops to fight the Goths. In August 378, 30,000 legionaries marched against Fritigern's troops at Adrianople – to the great dismay of the emperor, the Goth king's troops were superior. Around 20,000 Romans fell, and a Gothic arrow fatally wounded the emperor. The battle was the largest single defeat of the Roman Empire since the wars against Carthage 700 years earlier. It was the Romans' first real warning of the threat posed by the Gothic warriors.

### ROMANS DISDAINED "BARBARIANS"

Fritigern's Goths, however, were far from the only danger that threatened Rome. On 31st December 406, a motley collection of tribes – Vandals, Suebi, Burgundians and Alans – crossed the frozen waters of the Rhine and embarked upon a raid through the Western Roman provinces. Contemporary historian St Jerome lamented the calamity in his records: "Savage tribes in countless numbers have over-run all parts of Gaul. The whole country between the Alps and Pyrenees, between the Rhine and the ocean, has been laid waste by hordes of Quadi, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alans,

Gepids, Herules, Saxons, Burgundians, Alemanni and – alas! for the commonweal! – even Pannonians."

The Romans were derogatory about all the invading peoples and referred to them as "barbarians". They saw them as uncivilised hordes, who were inferior in every respect. Modern historians, however, believe they were more organised and intelligent. The Goths' great victory over Emperor Valens at Adrianople was not due to the animal savagery of swarms of wild, fur-clad men, as one might imagine from the image of the barbarians that Roman historians liked to draw. Fritigern's troops were, in fact, very well organised, and the Goth chief had both infantry and a powerful cavalry, which he skilfully exploited during the battle. The Romans' enemy was simply cleverer than they were, and won despite being outnumbered.

### FRANKS HAD RED MOUSTACHES

Like most other supposed barbarians, Fritigern's Goths belonged to the Germanic tribes that were originally spread over a vast area of modern-day eastern, central and northern Europe. The term "Germanic" covers far more than present-day Germany. The Alans, for example, were a warlike equestrian people, with roots north-east of the Black Sea. Like the Goths, they were probably pushed westward by the Huns, and then split up to merge with various other tribes.

We know surprisingly little about the daily life of the Germanic peoples, and how they thought and looked, because they didn't leave written evidence themselves. Instead, we have to rely on Roman sources. About the Goths, the Romans reported that men were often larger and stronger than the average Roman, and they typically let their beards grow. About the red-haired Franks, the historian Sidonius Apollinaris wrote:

"Their eyes are faint and pale, with a glimmer of greyish blue. Their faces are shaven all round, and instead of beards



ATTILA ?-453

## THE HUNS' GREATEST KING

■ The real-life Attila was probably somewhat less wild and bloodthirsty than most Romans, and Hollywood directors, liked to portray him. Admittedly, at the height of Attila's campaigns, the Huns conquered and plundered vast regions, but this was largely due to his mastery of military tactics rather than any particular savagery on the part of his Hun warriors. In the fifth century, the Roman diplomat Priscus was sent on an

official visit to Attila at his headquarters on the Hungarian plains. He recounted how the Hun king – described as a thickset man with a grey beard, flat nose and narrow, watchful eyes – sat quietly on a pillow in his lavishly decorated dining hall, while servants entered the room, bearing a magnificent meal on silver trays.

Born into the Hun royal family – Allied with the Romans at times – Plundered Milan



> they have thin moustaches which they run through with a comb. Close-fitting garments confine the tall limbs of the men; they are drawn up high so as to expose the knees, and a broad belt supports their narrow middle."

#### TRIBES ADMITTED NEW MEMBERS

Common to the Germanic tribes was the fact that they were typically led by kings who were appointed by the tribe's free men, and these rulers also acted as religious leaders. The tribes were not attached to specific regions, but bound together by clan affiliation and a common language.

Historians still debate how fixed these tribal communities were, and some think it misleading to talk about migrant peoples. Possibly, the groups were made up of warriors who attracted a large retinue of fortune-seekers while on their successful expeditions through the Roman Empire. At any rate, some of the Germanic tribes were happy to welcome prisoners of war into their ranks, and when they settled among defeated clans, they became virtually indistinguishable from their former opponents within a few generations. Even the Goths and Vandals, who went from victory to victory through the Roman Empire, left their old culture behind them and adopted new customs along the way.

When it suited them, tribes even allowed themselves to be recruited to fight for Rome against other alleged barbarians – for a fee. This happened with both the Huns and the Visigoth king Alaric. He'd learned the art of war as an officer in Rome's legions and had fought for Emperor Theodosius. But when the emperor put Alaric and his warriors in the front line of a great battle, the Visigoth chief felt that the Romans were deliberately sacrificing the Goths. This prompted him to start a revolt that, in the years leading up to 409, took the Visigoths all the way to Rome's city gates.

#### EMPEROR TRIED TO CHEAT THEM

Even with his sword pressed against Rome's throat, Alaric was ready to swap the short-term gain of looting the city for a long-term solution that would give his tribe peace and a place to call home. However,

#### EYEWITNESS

*SALVIAN / The siege of Trier, 406*

#### GERMAN RAIDS

“ They who escaped death in the city's destruction did not survive disaster after its fall, for wounds, struck deeply, killed some with lingering deaths. Others were burned by the flames of the enemy or even suffered the pain of torture after the flames were extinguished. Some died of hunger, some of nakedness, and some wasted away. ... Here and there ... lay the nude and torn bodies of both sexes, infecting the eyes of the city as they were torn to pieces by birds and dogs. The deadly stench of the dead brought death to the living. ”

## GERMANIC KINGS TOOK OVER WESTERN EUROPE

■ When the Western Roman Empire collapsed in 476, it was quickly divided. Just 25 years after the fall of Rome, Germanic kings had

split the entire Western Roman Empire among themselves and established a number of states, which often fought each other.



the new Western Roman emperor, Honorius, repeatedly rejected the Goths' demands and even attempted to launch a sneak attack on them in the middle of the negotiations. On 24th August 410, Alaric's patience ran out. With an army bolstered by escaped slaves, he unleashed his might on Rome. For three days, the warriors plundered the city. Only the churches were spared by the Christian Alaric.

The unthinkable had happened. Rome had fallen to a barbarian army. Alaric died the following year, but his Visigoths continued marauding down through Italy and on to France and Spain. Meanwhile, Suebi, Vandals, Burgundians and other tribes invaded the rest of the crumbling Western Roman Empire.

#### VANDALS RAN AMOK

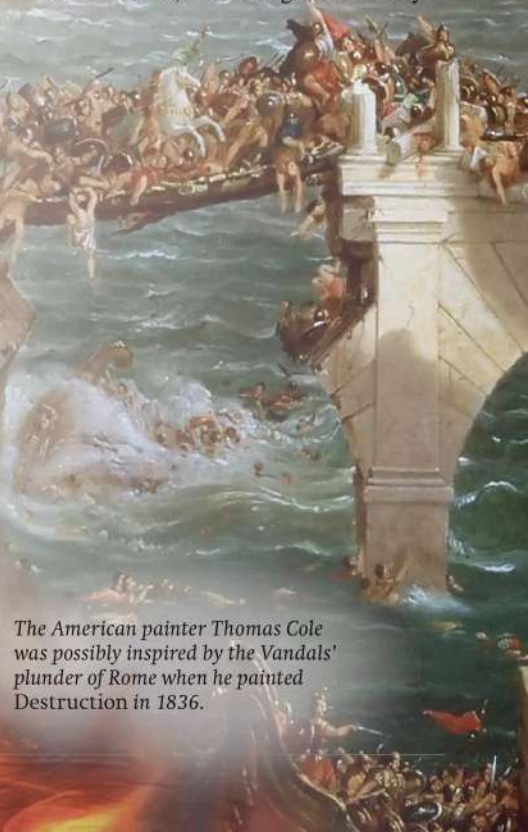
In the 440s, there was a new threat to the Eastern and the Western Roman Empires. The new King Attila of the Huns had built an enormous kingdom north-east of the Roman Empire, and embarked upon several campaigns to the Balkans. The Huns had mastered Roman siege techniques, and their army used battering rams to smash holes through gates and walls – they were a fearsome enemy. Attila threatened to attack Constantinople and forced the Eastern Roman emperor to pay huge sums in gold every year to ensure the city was left in peace.

The king of the Huns never attacked the Eastern Roman capital, but in 451 his horsemen roared into the Western Roman Empire. An alliance of Germans and Romans slowed down the Huns during a battle near Troyes in northern France, but the defeat didn't deter Attila. The following year, he sent his army into northern Italy and plundered Milan. However, the Hun

army ran out of supplies, and in 453 Attila died in bed on his wedding night – according to sources, he choked to death while suffering a nosebleed in a drunken stupor. After Attila's death, the Hun kingdom quickly fell apart, but Europeans can thank him for Venice – a city built on water to prevent the Huns attacking.

#### GERMANS DEPOSED CHILD EMPEROR

While Attila never repeated the Goth Alaric's success by sacking Rome, the Vandals did so two years after the Hun's death. This time, the looting lasted 14 days



The American painter Thomas Cole was possibly inspired by the Vandals' plunder of Rome when he painted *Destruction* in 1836.



and was so violent that the Vandals' name became synonymous with ravaging thugs.

In step with the conquests of former Roman territory, Rome's tax base shrank. The empire could no longer afford to pay its many Germanic mercenaries, upon whom, over several centuries, it had become increasingly dependent for maintaining peace. Power thus slipped from the Western Roman emperors into the hands of Germanic generals, who fought as much for themselves as for the Roman Empire.

Without a united army, the Western Roman Empire couldn't defend itself, and during the 470s, the Germanic army commander Odoacer took power in Italy. It was he who sounded the death knell for the Western Roman Empire when, in 476, he deposed the 16-year-old emperor Romulus Augustulus. By returning the regalia of the Western Roman emperor – the diadem and purple cloak – Odoacer sent a message to the Eastern Roman emperor: they were no longer needed. The protests of the emperor in Constantinople were merely symbolic.

Odoacer's reign, however, was short. A few years later, he was ousted by the Ostrogoths, who invaded Italy from their former settlements in the Balkans. By the year 500, Germanic tribes had established new kingdoms throughout the western half of the Roman Empire. The Visigoths settled in Spain, the Burgundians established themselves in Provence, the Ostrogoths retained power over Italy, and in Gaul the Franks created the most viable state of them all. It would later be named France.

In Constantinople, the Eastern Roman emperor retained power behind the largest fortifications the Romans had ever built, and the Christian Byzantine Empire soon emerged. Europe was nearing the Middle Ages, and after 1,200 years of Roman history, a new era was about to begin. ■







POPVLVS SENATVS  
DIVO VESPASIANO  
OPTIMO PRINCIPI





# ROME'S ENDURING LEGACY

476-today

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The collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD was far from the end of antiquity's superpower. The empire is one of a select few cultures to have etched itself into history. The Romans have inspired everyone from the geniuses of the Renaissance and the United States' Founding Fathers to the brutal dictators of the 20th century. The empire's symbols have been reused on the uniforms of both Confederate soldiers and Mussolini's fascists. Rome's legacy lives on all around us: when politicians deliver their messages, the hammer falls in the courtroom and even when we flush the loo.



## 476-today

**476** The empire collapses and ancient texts are scattered across Europe.

**1421** Italian scholars rediscover Cicero's texts on rhetoric.

**1804** Napoleon is crowned emperor wearing a laurel wreath.

**1859** Construction begins on London's new sewer system.

**1936** Hitler begins the planning of a new capital: Germania.

476 >>> 1421 >>> 1804 >>> 1859 >>> 1936 >>>

Just before noon on 8th December 1941, US President Franklin D Roosevelt took to the podium at the US Capitol. He was about to deliver one of the most important political speeches of the century. Roosevelt was shaken and furious but retained his focus. In Hawaii, in the North Pacific, the smoke was still rising from the Pearl Harbor naval base, which Japanese bombers had attacked the day before. The assembled members of Congress sat silently, ready to hear the message of their leader. The United States was going to war.

"With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God," Roosevelt thundered.

The moment belongs to the annals of 20th century history, but countless details of that famous scene can be traced back thousands of years to Ancient Rome. The titles of those listening, including Senators, Republicans and legal counsel, are taken directly from Rome's political universe. The key words in the president's speech – "the inevitable triumph" – are delivered from the Latin *inevitabilis* and *triumpha*, while on a deeper level, Roosevelt's speech patterns originate from Ancient Rome's greatest rhetorical genius: Cicero.

## US WAS BUILT ON A 'ROMAN' HILL

Roosevelt wasn't the first American to follow in the footsteps of the Romans. Thomas Jefferson – one of the main figures behind the

Declaration of Independence in 1787 and who later became the US's third president from 1801 to 1809 – took inspiration from the ancient superpower when helping to construct the modern United States.

Jefferson was greatly inspired by Roman political philosophers and owned over 40 of Cicero's books. As a former ambassador to France, he had – according to his own testimony – sat in the city of Nîmes, gazing at the ancient Maison Carrée, a Roman temple from the time of Christ, "like a lover at his mistress".

It took Europeans until the 19th century to construct toilets of the same quality as Roman latrines.

His love of Roman architecture followed Jefferson back across the Atlantic and ensured the new US Congress building was built with chalk-white Roman columns topped with a Pantheon-inspired dome.

To complete the picture, Jefferson decided to name the new building Capitol Hill after the most important of Rome's seven ancient hills, the Capitol, where the foundations of his political ideas for a democratic republic had been laid 2,000 years earlier.

## BOOKS WERE A ROMAN IDEA

Jefferson wasn't the only one inspired by the Romans. The old empire's fingerprints are on everything from our political apparatus to literature, architecture and – by no means least – our ordinary everyday lives, including trips to the swimming pool.

In the first century AD, the Roman philosopher Seneca wrote a letter to his friend Licilius, in which he complained about the noise of bathers' cries, ball games, and belly flops in the public Roman baths. After disappearing for a thousand years, this Roman idea was revived in the 19th century when the first modern European swimming pools sprang up, allowing the public to bathe and enjoy themselves indoors just as the ancient Romans had.

Another beloved Roman invention that lay dormant for a millennium was the ice house. Both the Persians and Chinese had probably eaten ice cream long before Rome became a great power, but as always, the Romans refined and improved the invention. They transported blocks of ice down from the mountains, mixed the crushed ice with fruit and sold the refreshing delicacy from city bars. Thus, when Italy markets itself as the home of ice cream, it's no idle boast.

When flipping through books and magazines – rather than reading text on a



The Romans developed the codex, which bound smaller pieces of papyrus together. Easier to flip through than a scroll, the book was born.

long roll of paper – we can also thank the Romans. They developed the 'codex', the precursor of modern-day books. The invention was a practical one: by attaching pieces of Egyptian papyrus to a hard back, the reader could flip through and find the information he needed faster than via a scroll. Roman texts were also given a table of contents, like those in modern books.

## BRITISH REINVENTED SEWERS

The Romans' legacy isn't just around us, it's beneath us, too. The Romans were far ahead of their time when they created their extensive and efficient network of sewers. While streets in the Middle Ages a thousand years later were awash with human waste, causing disease to flourish, the Romans kept their capital relatively clean thanks to an ingeniously constructed sewage system. Roman sewers were the model for English civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette when he began construction on London's new waste system in 1859.

London had become the world's largest city, but now stank of death and decay. Over the course of a few decades, 30,000 people had died of cholera spread through the faeces of the steadily growing population. The old system that relied on cesspits, sewers and night soil men who carted their contents out of the city – had collapsed >>>>

The Pantheon temple in Rome was the inspiration behind Thomas Jefferson's decision to give the US Capitol building a dome.

## ROMAN NAMES LIVE ON

Hundreds of Western names are derived from or have roots in Latin, like Amanda, which means "deserving to be loved".

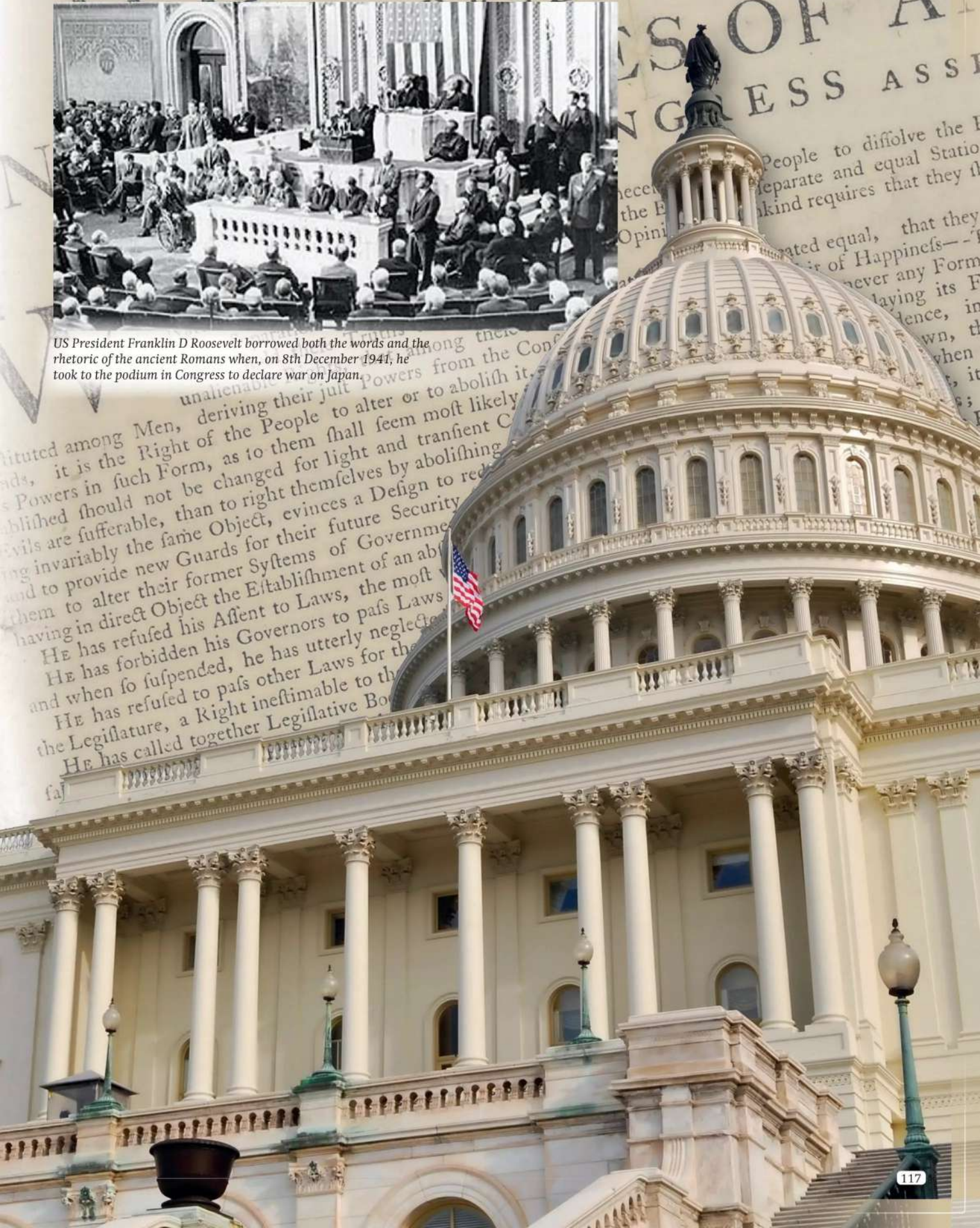
| Roman name | Modern name        |
|------------|--------------------|
| Julius     | Julius / Julie     |
| Antonius   | Anthony / Tony     |
| Marcus     | Marcus / Mark      |
| Martinus   | Martin             |
| Franciscus | Frances            |
| Philippus  | Philip / Phillip   |
| Paulus     | Paul / Paula       |
| Dominicus  | Dominic            |
| Horatius   | Horace             |
| Margarita  | Margaret / Maggie  |
| Constantia | Constance / Connie |





US President Franklin D Roosevelt borrowed both the words and the rhetoric of the ancient Romans when, on 8th December 1941, he took to the podium in Congress to declare war on Japan.

...among their  
unalienable Powers from the Cong  
stituted among Men, deriving their ju  
rights, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it,  
Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely  
should not be changed for light and transient C  
Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing  
invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to red  
and to provide new Guards for their future Security  
them to alter their former Systems of Governme  
having in direct Object the Establishment of an ab  
He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most  
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws  
and when so suspended, he has utterly neglecte  
He has refused to pass other Laws for the  
the Legislature, a Right inestimable to the  
He has called together Legislative Bo





>>>> under the weight of a city of millions. As a result, all the waste emptied directly into the Thames, turning the once salmon-filled waters into a stinking swamp.

What sewage system existed at this time had been built solely to divert surface water. Bazalgette instead connected the sewer pipes directly to people's toilets. Like the Roman engineers before him, the Briton exploited the terrain to perfection, so gravity ensured the waste could be transported even over long distances. Moreover, he built with one eye to the future knowing the city would grow further, planning 850 kilometres of sewers in all. For the first time since Rome's *Cloaca Maxima* (Greatest Sewer), a large city had swept away its inhabitants' waste – and the stench that went with it.

#### ROMAN KNOWLEDGE FADED AWAY

After the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476, knowledge of sewers and ice houses weren't the only things lost. Roman architecture and knowledge in philosophy, engineering and other areas remained hidden for centuries.

When Roman schools closed and the educated upper classes crumbled, demand for literature shrivelled and book production fell drastically. Existing texts by ancient literary greats like Seneca, Ovid, Virgil, Livius, and Cicero were scattered throughout Europe, often ending up in the libraries of monasteries.

Others were lost – ironically partly because of the Roman codex, because those texts weren't transferred to new leaf-bound

## “Roman architecture and knowledge remained hidden for centuries”

books when papyrus scrolls were discarded. The Romans produced huge numbers of texts on everything from history and mathematics to philosophy and erotic poetry, but historians have limited sources to draw on after the empire's collapse and the five centuries that followed. It's certain, however, that the formerly magnificent Colosseum was also left to decay, while Rome's remaining inhabitants plundered both the amphitheatre and the Roman Forum for building materials.

#### LATIN BECAME A WORLD LANGUAGE

Although part of Roman culture was lost, in many respects a straight line ran from the Romans to the new rulers of the empire's former territories. In 800, Pope Leo III of Rome crowned King Charlemagne *Imperator*

*Romanorum* (Emperor of the Romans). Charlemagne had conquered significant parts of Europe, including Italy, and although as a Christian Frank, he in no way romanticised the Roman Empire, he accepted the title that was bestowed on him. A later successor, Frederik Barbarossa, also took the imperial title in 1155. And they weren't the last to adorn themselves with an imperial title: until the 20th century, there was always an 'emperor' or 'tsar' somewhere in the world.

All of southern Europe continued to speak a variety of Roman Latin – dubbed



After decades of foul odours and disease, London decided in 1859 to supply the city with efficient sewers following the Roman model.



The laurel wreath symbolises victory.

The inscription Justice comes from the Roman word *Justitia*.



The Constitution has its roots in the word *constitutio*, which means 'set of rules'.

Pillars were characteristic of Roman architecture.

'Vulgar Latin' — which eventually evolved into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, and other modern Latin languages. Later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, English adopted over ten thousand Latin words, and today there is virtually no European dictionary that isn't littered with examples of words that have survived from Roman times. Latin itself remains a world language in areas including law, theology, diplomacy and medicine. For example, doctors still use Latin terms when mapping the body's anatomy. Even the name of their own profession, medicine, derives from the Latin *mederi* (to heal).

#### LEGACY LIVED ON IN THE EAST

For almost a millennia following Rome's fall, the Roman Empire lived on primarily in the Eastern Roman Empire (aka

During the American Civil War, Confederate soldiers wore an emblem with Roman symbols on their uniforms.

Byzantium), which had its centre in Constantinople (now Istanbul). The empire was ruled by an emperor with an advisory senate. Neighbours called the empire's inhabitants 'Romans' and their territory was referred to as 'Romania'.

Protected by the city's thick walls, Roman texts survived the test of time in the libraries of the Eastern Roman capital. In Constantinople, water still flowed through the Valens Aqueduct, which carried supplies to the public Zeuxippus baths. In 1453, the Ottomans succeeded in conquering the surviving half of the empire, and Sultan Mehmet II's takeover of the capital finally put an end to the Roman Empire.

Those Christian inhabitants who fled the Ottomans brought Roman ideas with them back to Italy, where 15th-century scholars again became interested in the Roman art and architecture among the overgrown

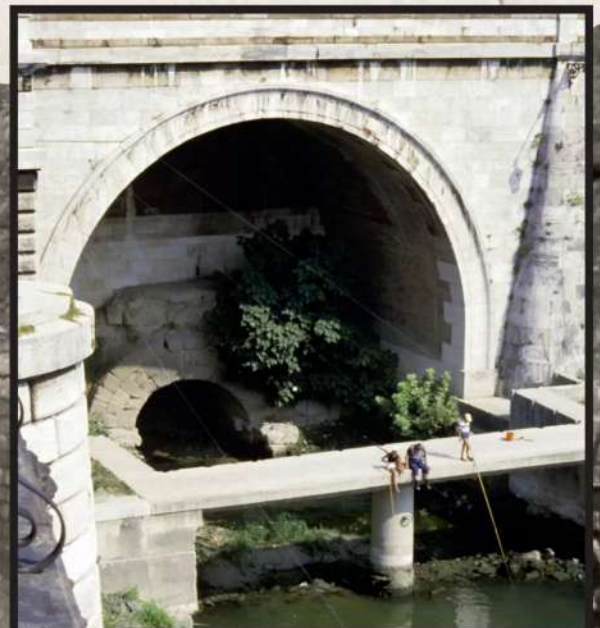
ruins, whether still-imposing structures or buried in the earth throughout the cities of the ancient empire. Roman philosophy also enjoyed a resurgence.

The literary classics of antiquity again became compulsory reading for Renaissance scholars. Bookstores could earn a fortune from manuscripts by the famous Roman historian Livius, and buyers treated the works as treasures. In 1421, learned Italians dusted off the textbooks of the political philosopher Cicero, and they formed schools to study rhetoric at the early universities.

At the same time, Renaissance genius Leonardo da Vinci sat with his nose buried in ancient writings about everything from weapons to architecture while sketching his groundbreaking catapaults and tanks. Elsewhere, artists recreated ancient motifs and architecture in works such as Botticelli's world-famous painting 'The Birth of Venus' or St Peter's Church in Rome. A few centuries later, the balance of power in the Senate or the strengths and weaknesses of the Emperor Augustus were common points of contention when young men debated at student clubs in Paris and London.

#### NAPOLÉON IDOLISED THE ROMANS

One of the greatest admirers of ancient Rome was the Corsican-born Napoleon Bonaparte. As a young man, he read enthusiastically about Caesar and his murderer Brutus. Both stood among the greatest Romans for the young Napoleon,



The construction of Cloaca Maxima, Rome's largest sewer, began around the year 600 BC and was completed in several stages. Parts of the sewer still function today.



who subsequently won acclaim in the wake of the French Revolution with his ingenious feats on the battlefield. The upheavals in Paris in 1789 also drew threads directly back to the political ideas of antiquity. The democracy of the Greeks, of course, played a major role, but the France that emerged after the revolution was built on inspiration from Roman law, where all laws were adopted and written down, so every citizen was guaranteed a measure of legal certainty. And the heated discussions about citizens' rights must have sounded like an echo of the wrangling between plebeians and patricians in the ancient Roman Republic two thousand years earlier.

In 1799, Napoleon seized power in a coup and, inspired by the ancient Roman Empire, appointed himself Consul General. Five years later, the ruler allowed himself to be crowned Emperor of the French during a pompous ceremony in Notre Dame cathedral in Paris. In front of the altar, Napoleon received his tribute wearing precious velour and ermine robes. On his head, the new emperor wore a golden laurel wreath – clearly inspired by Caesar, who had worn similar wreaths as a symbol of victory.

#### EMPEROR COPIED TRIUMPHAL ARCH

The newly appointed emperor's war of conquest in Europe was also inspired by his ancient role models. Just as the Romans

brought art and precious craftsmanship to Rome from their newly conquered provinces, Napoleon made sure to send horse-drawn carriages to Paris with all the ancient art his soldiers had been able to plunder from newly occupied territories.

To celebrate the victory in the War of the Third Coalition in 1806, Napoleon decided to erect a grandiose

monument in the heart of the empire's capital. Napoleon's famous Arc de Triomphe in Paris was constructed as a faithful replica of the Roman emperor's triumphal arch in Rome. Just as Titus's arch depicted the conquest of the province of Judea, Napoleon's new 50-metre-high structure was

adorned with reliefs of victory scenes from the emperor's campaign. Now, like the Roman emperors, Napoleon could triumphantly hold pageants and military parades through the arch in Paris.

#### HITLER'S THIRD REICH

Well over a century later, another ambitious politician was to develop a taste for Roman architecture. During a stay in prison in the 1920s, the young Austrian Nazi named Adolf Hitler worked on his battle script *Mein Kampf*.

"Roman history... is and remains the best teacher not only for today but

probably for all times," he dictated to his secretary and political ally Rudolf Hess.

Later, in 1939, Hitler thundered in a speech on the future of the Reich: "This is the special and wonderful property of architecture: When the work has been done, a monument remains. That endures ... and through the centuries will bear witness to all those who helped to create it."

It would become his overarching aim when, in collaboration with the architect Albert Speer, he formed plans for Germania, the new capital of the Third Reich, which would expand and rebuild Berlin.

Speer sketched and built models of a Germania centred around the Via Triumphalis, which would run through a 117-metre-high triumphal arch. In ancient Rome, a boulevard with a similar name had run between the Palatine Hill and the Colosseum.

Hitler planned huge structures to dwarf all that came before, including the 320-metre high *Volkshalle* (People's Hall), capable of seating 180,000. The Nazis began to demolish the centre of Berlin to make way for the huge avenues and domed halls, but construction was forced to a halt in 1942 due to the war.

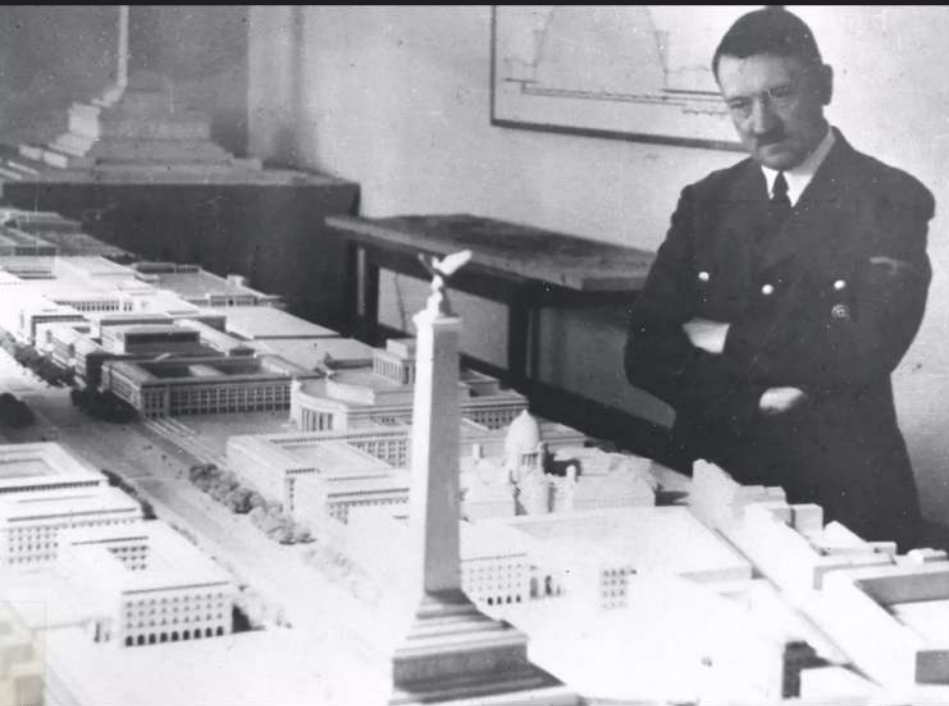
#### MUSSOLINI LOOKED TO ROME

Hitler's ally in the south, Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, also had plans

"Napoleon received his tribute wearing precious velour and ermine robes. On his head... a golden laurel wreath"



Roman officials carried a fasces – an emblem co-opted by Italian fascists.



Hitler ordered parts of Berlin's city centre torn down to make way for the construction of the Third Reich's new capital, Germania. Inspired by ancient Rome, the centre would be adorned with domed halls and a triumphal arch. Construction started, but ground to a halt in 1942 due to the war.





for a "Third Rome" and meticulously reused Roman symbols. The dictator equipped his new "legions" with standards, just as the Ancient Romans had, while the fascists' crest bore an eagle's claws around a fasces, which was a symbol of power and authority in Republican Rome.

Mussolini had already built a road – the Via dei Fori Imperiali – through the centre of Rome when in 1934 he erected four marble and bronze maps along the route showing the development of Rome from a small city to empire. In 1936, El Duce added a fifth map to reveal Italian expansion under his own regime, including the conquest of Ethiopia.

With Hitler and Mussolini's defeat in 1945, their visions of millennial empires that would revive the greatness of ancient Rome died, and the fifth marble map was quickly torn down. But the legacy of the most powerful empire in antiquity, which began with a small settlement on a hill near the Tiber river, continues to live on. ■

◀ The Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini copied the standards of Roman legions in his parades. The dictator also allowed himself to be depicted with a lion cub by his side, following in the footsteps of the Roman emperors who kept exotic wild animals imported from the provinces of Africa.

► In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed himself emperor. With a laurel wreath on his head and carrying a sceptre with an eagle, the French ruler portrayed himself as the model of a Roman emperor. During his coronation in Notre Dame cathedral, Napoleon took the crown from the hands of Pope Pius VII and placed it over his own head.





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## DEATH MATCH IN THE ARENA

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## BARBARIANS AT THE CITY GATE

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## ROME'S ENDURING LEGACY

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# Rome was the ancient superpower

In 52 BC, after six years of war against the Gallic tribes, Julius Caesar had tamed yet another enemy for Rome. Soon taxes and grain flowed from Gaul towards the imperial capital, whose citizens enjoyed all manner of luxuries from the provinces. Everything had changed since outlaws had founded Rome almost five centuries earlier. The small city had grown powerful through military might and political ingenuity, and the Roman Republic came to rule an expanse of territory that stretched around the Mediterranean and beyond. A few years later, Julius Caesar was assassinated and the republic became an empire that mad tyrants and power-hungry generals would slowly destroy from within.

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